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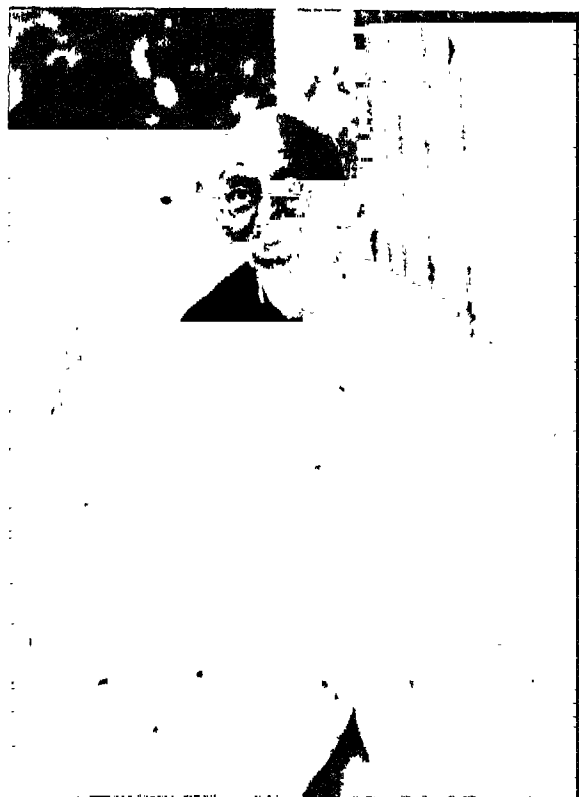
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# THE EPIC FAST

BY  
PYARELAL

“ सन्तो भूमिं तपसा धारयन्ति ”  
“ *Men of Truth sustain the Earth  
by their penance.* ”



AHMEDABAD

1932



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To  
*The Down-Trodden of the World*



## PREFACE

IT was my good fortune during Gandhiji's recent fast to be in constant attendance on him with Sjt. Brijkishen of Delhi, a fellow worker in the cause. It was felt by all who had the privilege of entering into the deep experience of that week of grace that it would be a tragedy if that experience could not be shared with others. It was also felt that a publication like this at the present juncture might be of help in implementing the Yeravda 'Fact and Gandhiji's pledge given to the Harijans.

In writing the chapters under the heading 'A Fortnight of Agony' I have had the fullest assistance from Sjt. Devadas Gandhi, who from the beginning to the end was in close touch with the negotiations between Depressed Class representative and Caste Hindus, while the general work of compiling the material was rendered possible in the midst of various other engagements only by the able assistance of Sjt. Chandrashanker Shukl of the Gujarat Vidyapith. Our thanks are also due to all those friends who went through the proofs of these pages and helped us in various other ways, as also the staff of the Karnatak Press who have taken a personal interest in expediting the printing of the book.

The book is being so priced as barely to cover the cost of publication. Savings, if any, will be devoted entirely to the cause of the Harijans.

As this is being sent to the press the shadow of another penance on the part of Gandhiji is lengthening over the land. These pages shall have amply fulfilled their purpose if they help to soften men's hearts and incline them to turn the search light inward.

Manibhavan,  
Bombay  
12th November 1932.

PYAREL



## FOREWORD

TO find a parallel for the anguish of September 1932, we have to go far back to Athens twenty three centuries ago when the friends of Socrates surrounded him in prison and importuned him to escape from death. Plato has recorded the questions and answers. Socrates smiled at the suggestion of escape and preached the immortality of the soul. So also Gandhiji smiled and wrote to those that tried to dissuade him: "I have no doubt about the truth of the inner voice, nor have I any doubt that you will soon see the light out of the darkness of this sorrow." Then, about two thousand years ago there was another scene of similar anguish and a similar answer was given at Jerusalem to the friends that wept for love of their Master.

• India heaved a sigh of relief on the night of the 24th September when the eleven days of anguish were over like a terrible dream. But unlike other bad dreams, this one has left behind not only a memory, but a real load of obligations, the discharge of which needs all the imagination and courage we are capable of. This book is prepared by those that were nearest to the central figure of that great story in the hope that it may serve as a source of inspiration for the discharge of the obligations undertaken. Let us remember that the sacrifice is still impending, that Gandhiji's life is verily held in pledge for the debt.

I was one of those that held that this offer of final sacrifice by Gandhiji was a case of the killing of the goose that laid the golden eggs. As for Socrates' friends it was difficult, so it was difficult for me, too, to remember that the goose can never be killed. I thought the body was the goose and pleaded that it was not right to threaten to die if ignorant and superstitious men did not decide within a fortnight to be wise and courageous.

Government, however, refused to let me obstruct the sacrifice except feebly in two very brief communications through post. I assigned myself to the inevitable.

I cannot say that I have yet seen the light. But let me note a few things that appear to me noteworthy. We have leaped over the immediate danger. The Premier's decision is not, however, the disease. It was only a symptom that revealed the nature and the terrible character of the evil. It threatened to split Hinduism and establish six crores of Hindus as different altogether from and as strangers to Hinduism. Gandhiji felt that this was a symptom that called for the knife. But with the withdrawal of the Premier's decision the disease is not cured. The altar is still there and Gandhiji's offer of sacrifice is also there unwithdrawn and emphatically renewed.

Secondly, the inhumanity is so great and the superstition so obstinate that the death of the most loved and the most esteemed among us cannot be too great a price or too drastic a remedy.

Thirdly, we did not deserve Mahatmaji, but God gave him to us. And He who gave may also take away. If the inner voice of Gandhiji tells him to sacrifice himself and not heed our importunities, it is God that takes away what He in his goodness gave us for a time. We may not complain. If we did not use the gift well and wisely and in time, and allowed it to be taken away, it is our fault.

Lastly, America secured her Abolition after sacrificing many precious lives. May be our Abolition also demands its commensurate price. We have, however, found a way to offer life without killing. This is a gain not loss.

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

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PART I  
A FORTNIGHT OF AGONY



# I

## PRELUDE

ON THE MORNING of 13th September, the whole of India, from one end to the other, was startled by the news of Gandhiji's resolve to "fast unto death". Its reverberations were felt in England and were echoed back from far-off America. The first feelings evoked by it were those of wonder and incredulity. The world was too stunned to catch the meaning or purpose of this challenge, at once so new and so unique. Here and there some loose tongues did not hesitate even to indulge in cheap gibes at "the self-imposed doom", "sentence of death", "deliberate suicide" and so on. But before the week was out, special prayers were being offered in many churches in England for Gandhiji's life, and the entire Indian nation with its three hundred millions of people, from the Himalayas to the Cape Comorin and from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal, was thrown into one long, unbroken convulsion of anguish, terror, grief and despair. When it emerged from the spasm, the Premier's decision had become unsettled. The ages-old citadel of untouchability had been levelled to the ground, and strong, eager hands were busily at work clearing away the *debris* of the crumbled edifice.

"Sometimes there comes a crack in Time itself,  
Sometimes the Earth is torn by something blind,  
Sometimes an image that has stood so long,  
It seems implanted as the Polar star,  
Is moved against an unfathomed force,  
That suddenly will not have it any more.

\* \* \* \*

"That force exists, and moves.

" And when it moves  
It will employ a hard and virtual stone  
To batter into bits an actual wall  
And change the actual scheme of things."

Nothing like it had been witnessed or heard of before, and now that the crisis is over it has left a world taken unawares still wondering at the miracle, debating in its innermost self whether to accept or reject its authenticity. But the curious and the sceptically minded must wait till the full story of the mental process that led to the epic resolve, which alone can finally set their doubts and questionings at rest, is released. Today it lies immured behind the stone walls of the Yeravda Central Prison.

## II

### THE AETIOLOGY

TO TRACE the aetiology of Gandhiji's fast, we shall have to go back to the history of the Second Round Table Conference—  
Squaring a Circle with all its sordid drama of "high diplomacy", wire-pulling and intrigue—that was held in London last year. Gandhiji had in his characteristic way registered India's claim for complete independence at the very outset of the Conference. Shortly afterwards, he lodged, as he described it, a "gentle complaint" against the Government's policy of withholding its cards, while the Conference was kept endlessly busy discussing minor details of constitution-making. The scene was thereupon shifted, in spite of the most vigorous protests from many sections of the Conference, to the Minorities Sub-Committee. Gandhiji would not allow the domestic wrangle to be staged at the Conference for the delectation of the world. He proposed an adjournment of the Conference so that the matter could be thrashed out by informal discussion. Over these discussions he was invited to preside. He saw the trap, the unreality of the whole show, the loaded dice. But he decided to face the ordeal. Here were a number of delegates specially selected from organizations that were known for the extremism of their communal bias



placed in an artificial perspective beyond the influence of the vast electorate that constitutes India's millions. They were not told what they would get at the end of their labours. All that they were assured was that any one of the various groups assembled there could, if its terms were not fully conceded, by its dissent, prevent all the rest from getting anything. To reconcile their inherently irreconcilable claims was as impossible a task as squaring a circle.

IT WAS in this setting that the claim on behalf of the Depressed Classes for a certain number of seats to be reserved for them in the Legislature was put before Gandhiji. Gandhiji did not mind their getting any number of seats provided the other communities could be made to agree to it. And he said so to Dr. Ambedkar. But with the Hindus and Musalmans struggling to maintain balance of power and the Sikh claim thrown in between, to accommodate the Depressed Class's demand was a mathematical impossibility. The Depressed Class's representatives thereupon joined the so-called Minorities Pact, with separate electorates and reservation as their cry. The conception of such a Pact was not altogether a new one. Mr. Villiers, a representative of the Bengal European group, had actually adumbrated it in a public speech in India, in which he had held out the threat that unless the Congress behaved, the Europeans would join with the Musalmans and other minorities to fight it. That did not trouble Gandhiji. But when the Premier in his speech of the 13th of November 1931 in the Minorities Subcommittee officially blessed the Pact and the Depressed Class demand for separate electorates as embodied in it, he saw the snake in the grass and determined to set his foot down on it, if necessary, at the cost of his life. "I can understand," he declared, in a speech that has become memorable, in a voice tense with pent up feeling, "the claim advanced by other minorities, but the claim advanced on behalf of the 'untouchables' is to me

the unkindest cut of all." It means perpetual bar sinister. I would not sell the vital interests of the 'untouchables' even for the sake of winning the freedom of India." "I claim myself, in my own person," he proceeded, "to represent the vast mass of the 'untouchables'. . . . I claim that I would get, if there was a referendum of the 'untouchables', their vote, and that I would top the poll." He then went on to expose the fallacy underlying the analogy between the Depressed Classes and the other minorities with regard to special representation. "Sikhs may remain as such in perpetuity," he pointed out, "so may Muslims, so may Europeans. Would 'untouchables' remain untouchables in perpetuity?" "Let this Committee and let the whole world know that today there is a body of Hindu reformers who feel that this is a shame not of the 'untouchables', but of orthodox Hinduism, and they are, therefore, pledged to remove this blot. We do not want on our register and on our census 'untouchables' classified as a separate class. I would far rather that Hinduism 'died than that untouchability lived." Special representation, he warned them, would create a division in Hinduism, which he could not view with any satisfaction whatever. He did not mind the 'untouchables' being converted to Islam or Christianity; he could tolerate that. But he could not tolerate the chronic civil war and the certain disruption of Hinduism that would follow, if these two divisions were set up in every village. That would bode good neither to Hinduism nor to the Depressed Classes. He was afraid that it was not a proper claim that Dr. Ambedkar had registered when he sought to speak for the whole of the 'untouchables' in India. Then, rising to a peroration, he announced his fateful pledge. "The cause of the 'untouchables' is dear to me as life itself," he declared, "I will not bargain away their rights for the kingdom of the whole world. . . . Those who speak of the political rights of 'untouchables' do not know India and do not know how Indian society is today constructed. Therefore, I want to say with all the emphasis I can command that if I

was the only person to resist this thing, I will resist it with my life."

GANDHIJI HAS since been accused by critics bent upon finding fault with him, of intransigence in this connection. It has been stated that if he had only agreed to the Depressed Class's demand for a certain number of seats being reserved for them in the legislatures, they would have been reconciled to the joint electorates and not been forced to enter into the Minorities Pact. These critics forget that Gandhiji had gone to the R. T. C. not in his personal capacity but as a representative of the Congress and as such was bound by the terms of the Congress mandate. He had no authority to act on his own. He never objected to the representation of the Depressed Classes in the legislature or even to their over-representation, consistently with the claim of the other communities. On the contrary, he was anxious to secure their adequate representation. He even expressed his readiness, under certain conditions, to guarantee by statute a specified number of seats to be filled by them. The published records of the proceedings of the Second Round Table Conference are there to prove it. He discussed several alternative proposals in the place of the scheme of separate electorates with the representatives of the Depressed Classes. But there never was put before him a specific scheme for statutory reservation of seats for his acceptance or rejection. Opposed he certainly was to the principle of reservation as being harmful to the Depressed Classes. But they never came to brass tacks on that point. There were other forces at work underground and time and tide were against it.

### III

#### "LEAD KINDLY LIGHT"

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

*John xv, 13.*

**G**ANDHIJI landed from s. s. "Pilsna" in Bombay on 28th December last. The Working Committee had been summoned to meet there on the 31st. It was Irony of Fate Gandhi's intention to dispose of the questions of commercial safeguards and the Indian States as quickly as possible or to leave them to be dealt with by competent persons and himself to concentrate on mobilizing public opinion in favour of a solution of the communal question and the Depressed Class question in particular, on national lines, as indicated in his London speech. But that was not to be. Almost the first news that he received before landing was about the arrest of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr. Sherwani at Allahabad as they were proceeding to meet him in Bombay. On 4th January he himself was arrested and spirited away in the dead of night to the Yeravda Central Prison. There, cribbed in a special yard, in complete isolation from all his comrades save Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, he gathered up and focussed

all the powers of his being on such pin-point problems connected with his daily round of duties as, how to draw the thread for his sacrificial spinning with the right hand when the left hand struck work, how to make the little children at the Sabarmati Ashram, to whom he wrote unfailingly every week, realize the ideals of Truth and Ahimsa better in their day to day life, and so on. For Gandhiji it was a period of grace, self-dedication and prayer:

"God doth not need  
Either man's work or His own gifts, who best  
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best."

WEEK AFTER week, news of black repression all over the country trickled in through the double censor of the Press Ordinance and the Jail and would sometimes raise a delicate point of conscience. But what filled his mind above all was the position of the Depressed Classes under the new constitution and the pledge that he had taken in London. The Lothian Committee arrived in India on 17th January. By the beginning of March it had made sufficient progress with its labours to warrant the expectation that the Government's decision on the communal question might be announced any moment. What was he to do? Should he allow the fatal step to be taken, or should he give a final warning to the Government before it was too late? Here were his own teachings put on test in his person. Had he not taught to countless men and women and little children of his Ashram, who came to him, in the fullness of faith about the immanence and omnipotence of soul force, and its capacity to transcend all material barriers and obstacles? And was he now going to be a helpless witness of his life mission being destroyed by an authority drunk with power, that had cast his body into prison? He prayed for light. A sugges-

tion had been conveyed to him through Father Elwin by some English friends that the well-wishers of India all over the world should join in singing "Lead Kindly Light" at a fixed time at the end of the Friday evening prayers. This was punctiliously done in Yeravda by Gandhiji and his companions.

"So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still  
Will lead me on,  
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent till  
The night is gone."

The light came at last in a flash. On the 11th of March, after a night's vigil characterized by endless entreaties, prayers and arguments to reconsider his decision on one side and a cool, resigned firmness rooted in "some secret strength and mystic ecstasy of the soul" on the other, that strongly recalled the scene of Passion that was enacted on the mount of Olives two thousand years ago, he conveyed in a letter addressed to Sir Samuel Hoare his resolve to "fast unto death", in the event of the Government deciding to create separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. He also explained in his letter how his fundamental being had been shocked at the course that the repression was taking and which might also enforce a similar fast, but added that that was not a point in issue with him just then. He expressed the hope, however, that his fears were wholly unjustified and the British Government had no intention of creating separate electorates for the Depressed Classes.

Sir Samuel Hoare replied on the 13th of April 1932 in a letter stiffly worded and characteristically bureaucratic in its tone. It noted the strength of Gandhiji's feeling on the question, but regretted that His Majesty's Government could not anticipate the Lothian Committee's recommendations. All that Sir Samuel could promise was that Gandhiji's views would be "fully taken into account" before a final decision was arrived at. As for the repression, he was convinced that it was absolutely nece-

sary for the maintenance of "law and order" and that it was not in excess of the "minimum requirement" of the situation.

ON AUGUST 17, 1932, the Premier's decision on the communal question was officially announced. In spite of its ingenious-

ness it confirmed the worst fears of Gandhiji.  
 The Decision Taken      While creating a number of specially reserved

constituencies for the Depressed Classes it gave them the additional right to contest seats in the general constituencies, with the provision that special electorates and reservation of seats would automatically lapse after twenty years. Gandhiji's mind was made up. On August 18, 1932, he wrote to the Premier that the only way in which he could after that resist the Prime Minister's decision was by declaring "a perpetual fast unto death from food of any kind save water with or without salt and soda". The fast would come into force from the noon of September 20 next. He was asking the local authorities for the text of the letter being cabled to him. But in any case, he was leaving sufficient time for the letter to reach him by the slowest route. Even if the Government released him, he added, the fast would continue, because at that stage he could not hope to resist the decision in any other way. But the fast would cease if, before or after it was commenced, the British Government, either of its own will or under the pressure of public opinion, withdrew the scheme of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. "It may be," he concluded, "that my judgment is warped and that I am wholly in error in regarding separate electorates for Depressed Classes as harmful to them or to Hinduism. If so, I am not likely to be in the right with reference to other parts of my philosophy of life. In that case my death by fasting will be at once a penance for my error and a lifting of a weight from off those numberless men and women who have childlike faith in my wisdom. Whereas if my judgment is right, as I have little doubt it is, the contemplated step is but due to the fulfilment of

the scheme of life, which I have tried for more than a quarter of a century, apparently not without considerable success."

THE PREMIER'S reply to this letter was written on the 8th September, 1932. What happened to Gandhiji's letter in the

meantime ? Did Simla sleep over it ? Did  
 The Premier's  
 Tragic Failure the Bombay Government refuse to take note of  
 its urgency ? Did they despatch it by the ordinary mail instead of cabling its text to the Premier as Gandhiji had desired, or was it that it was pigeon-holed in the Premier's Secretariat, to share the usual fate of 'arrears of correspondence' ? —India and the world would want to know.

A careful study of the Premier's reply to Gandhiji's letter of the 18th September leaves no doubt in one's mind that the ingenious device of double votes for the Depressed Classes was not a genuine attempt to satisfy Gandhiji's point of view, but was calculated only to put him in the wrong while still maintaining the principle of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes, to which, for reasons of its own, the British Government had committed itself. The Premier even went out of his way to question Gandhiji's *bona fides* and to charge him with inimical intentions towards the Depressed Class interests. He had similarly doubted Gandhiji's *bona fides* at the Round Table Conference also. It is a tragedy that in spite of all his efforts, Gandhiji failed to break through the estrangement, that throughout handicapped him in his talks with the Premier, and to meet the whole man in him.

It may be argued, as it has been, on behalf of the British Premier that he only registered a state of affairs which he found at the moment, that he tried to take as neutral a view of the sectional cleavages that he found in existence as a man in his position could be expected\*to take. But that is precisely where his failure lay. As a well known Calcutta Christian Journal has observed, if he had been more sympathetic to Indian nationhood (and we may add, the Hindu spiritual aspiration to do



voluntary expiation for its sinful past) he would have used his opportunity to discountenance firmly all devious tendencies. "Since he overlooked that in the interests of political exigencies it was the duty of the Indian leader to make a counter-attack upon and check the sedulously fostered disruption of the country into multifarious sections. He, therefore, appeared with the sternest conceivable resolve to put an end to the mischievous tendencies that had enjoyed freedom all too long to the chagrin and dismay of all sincere patriots."

Gandhiji replied to the Premier's letter briefly reiterating his adherence to his decision to fast. He made no attempt to meet the charge of insincerity. When the basic sympathy of insight that constitutes the beginning of all understanding is lacking, it is useless to argue. "I am sorry," he remarked reproachfully, "that you put upon the contemplated step an interpretation that never crossed my mind . . . . I had hoped that the extreme step itself would effectively prevent any such interpretation. Without arguing let me affirm that for me this matter is one of pure religion. . . . In the establishment of a separate electorate at all for the Depressed Classes I sense the injection of poison that is calculated to destroy Hinduism and do no good whatever to the Depressed Classes." Had he not denounced the creation of the 'fifth caste' in Hinduism as an act of Satan? Who was an alien third party to decree a statutory separation of the Depressed Classes even in a limited form from the Hindu fold so long as they chose to remain in it? "You will please permit me to say," he added somewhat bitterly, "that no matter however sympathetic you may be, you cannot come to a correct decision on a matter of such vital and religious importance to the parties concerned. Do you realise that if your decision stands and the constitution comes into being, you arrest the marvellous growth of the work of Hindu reformers who have dedicated themselves to the uplift of their suppressed brethren in every walk of life?"

THE NECESSARILY restricted wording of his official letters prevented him from expatiating more fully on this living side of the question. One has only to visualize in its organic Indian setting the Depressed Class community, with its appalling poverty and ignorance, segregated in vile ghettos, in utter dependence for its very means of existence on the vast mass of the Caste Hindus in the midst of which it lies submerged, scattered over millions of villages, to realize the futility of trying to ameliorate their condition by purely statutory means. Having worked for their uplift for close upon half a century, Gandhiji knew that their salvation could come not through the machinery of law but through eradication by intensive social reform of caste prejudice and "custom more powerful than the law which has brought them to a degradation of which every thinking Hindu has need to feel ashamed and do penance". The goal that Gandhiji had laboured for all his life was a complete dissolution of the bar sinister which separated the 'untouchables' from the Hindu fold. The effect of the Premier's scheme of separate electorates on the other hand would have been to make of the bar sinister a group emblem and to organize 'untouchability' into a powerful vested interest. The process that it embodied was not one of fusion but of balancing of interests and of class-war. That the separate electorates would automatically disappear after 20 years could be no consolation to those who would be left to deal with a baneful legacy of poisoned relations, group antagonisms and separatist ideologies. The Premier's scheme obviously overlooked the grave peril, by no means remote, of discriminatory treatment and political rivalry in the legislatures, inflaming popular prejudice against the Depressed Classes. Having lived in their midst and closely studied their condition, Gandhiji knew that once such a process started, it would only end with creating a bigger, vaster edition of the American Negro problem in India with consequences far more disastrous to the suppressed race, in proportion as its

helplessness was greater. Law, in such an event, would be no more effective in India than it had proved in America. Of what avail would even a 'fast unto death' on his part be after the conflagration had started and the worst happened? He recoiled in horror at the very idea and felt that even a remote possibility of this kind must be prevented at all cost. No wonder that he could hardly restrain his indignation at the high-brow attitude of the English ruling class that "in its ignorance and self-satisfaction dares to sit as judges upon questions that affect the fundamental being of millions of people". "It was in order to wake up even officialdom from its gross ignorance," he declared, "that I felt impelled by a voice from within to offer resistance with the whole of my being."

#### IV

#### THE NATION'S TRAVAIL-I

THE GANDHI-HOARE-MACDONALD correspondence was released in Simla on the 12th and appeared in most of the daily newspapers on the morning of the 13th September. The situation in the country during the following week, from the 13th to the 20th, might be compared to a huge building on fire. There was a never-to-be-forgotten combination of fervent prayer, panic, reckless courage and superhuman effort throughout the length and breadth of India. The announcement of Gandhiji's decision to 'fast unto death' served as a signal for a countrywide demand for a revision of the Premier's decision on the one hand, and a complete removal of all religious and social disabilities of the 'untouchables' on the other. By the vast bulk of the Depressed Class masses Gandhiji's resolve was interpreted as a supreme gesture to ratify by his death his faith in a cause that he held dearer than his life. Before this stupendous self-sacrifice, all differences, for the time being, were forgotten and the one consideration that reigned supreme in everybody's mind was that Gandhiji's life must be saved at all cost.

The ball was set rolling by the Depressed Class leader, Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah, in a public statement on the 13th September, in which he condemned the policy of political segregation adumbrated in the Premier's scheme of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes, and made an earnest appeal for concerted action on the part of all sections to save Gandhiji's life, whom he described as "the greatest benefactor of the poor and down-trodden classes, who by focussing world attention on the Depressed Class issue had earned the gratitude of all the members of that community." The same note was struck in the speeches delivered by Rao Bahadur Rajah and others on an adjournment motion in the Legislative Assembly. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru in a public statement made on the same day emphatically demanded Gandhiji's immediate release and expressed the hope that no wise Government would take any risks with the life of one "who alone could make any contribution to the solution of the communal problem by mutual agreement". A noble appeal was issued by Mr. Yakub Husain, the Muslim leader from Madras, exhorting the Depressed Classes to give up separate electorates to save Gandhiji's life, and warning his co-religionists against any "disrespectful belittling" of the noble self-sacrifice of one "who was held in the same regard and devotion by a large section of the Muslims with which he used to be when he was placed at the head of the Khilafat movement by the common consent of the whole community a decade ago". Simultaneously, manifestoes were issued by Sjt. G. D. Birla, Babu Rajendra Prasad and others. Babu Rajendra Prasad struck an important note when he emphasized the moral and religious aspect of the question. "The Hindu society is on its trial," he stated, "and if it has life in it, it must respond with a great and magnificent act. Political issues can then be more easily settled in an atmosphere of goodwill at a conference of leaders of the parties concerned." He suggested that the Hindus should prove themselves worthy of Gandhiji's

sacrifice by fully conceding to the so-called Depressed Classes the right of 'darshan' in the temples, drawing water from wells, education in schools, and use of public roads. Pandit Malaviyaji on the same day suggested the holding of a small conference of leaders at Delhi on the 17th and the 18th September. The venue of the meeting was later changed to Bombay at the instance of Mr. Jayakar, in anticipation of the necessity of frequent consultation with Gandhiji. This necessitated a change of the date too from the 18th to the 19th. A happy inspiration on the part of Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari was responsible for the suggestion that the 20th of September should be observed as a day of fasting and prayer all over India, and that mass meetings to demand withdrawal of the Premier's decision regarding separate electorates for the Depressed Classes and to offer prayers for Gandhiji's life, should be held on the evening of 19th September. The suggestion was whole-heartedly endorsed by Pandit Malaviyaji who had made it independently himself in the first instance with the difference only of date.

NOR WAS THE spontaneous demonstration of love and grief confined to the four corners of India. As soon as the news

English Sym- pathy	about Gandhiji's resolve to 'fast unto death' reached England, Mr. C. F. Andrews, the indefatigable friend of India, with Mr. Polak
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and a number of other English workers in the Indian cause, set to work to rouse English public opinion to a sense of the gravity of the crisis, and was prevented from coming to India only by a cable from Gandhiji suggesting that his help would be more urgently needed at the other end. Mr. Lansbury in a public speech at Poplar declared that Mahatma Gandhi, self-martyred for faith, would be "a mightier force still", and strongly urged the Government not to try to impose a settlement that could lead only to strife and conflict." An all-night vigil was kept at the Kingsley Hall and prayers for Gandhiji's life were offered by the inmates there, who were Gandhiji's hosts during

his recent stay in London. The Reconciliation group decided to remain more or less in continuous sitting while Gandhiji fasted. Under their auspices an appeal was issued calling upon members of all branches of Christian Churches to give some time on Sunday and throughout the coming week to a special prayer for India. This appeal was among others signed by Miss Maud Royden, Rev. Dr. Hewlett Johnson, the Dean of Canterbury, Dr. J. Scott Lidgett, the leader of the Methodists, and Rev. Dr. Paton, member of the International Missionary Council. Touching messages expressing appreciation of Gandhiji's penance and praying for fulfilment of its object were sent by Madame Safia Zaghlul and Mustapha Nahas Pasha, the ex-Premier and President of the Wafd party, from Egypt. The "Friends of India" decided upon a twentyfour hour fast on October 2 to be observed throughout the world as a gesture of sympathy and penance. The money so saved from food was to be presented to Gandhiji.

MILLIONS IN INDIA offered prayers and fasted in sympathy on the 20th. In millions of homes kitchen stoves were not lit

Fasting and  
Prayer

until late in the evening on the 20th. This and the public meetings that were held all over the country on the evening on the 19th marked the culminating point of the wonderful awakening that had set ablaze the whole country as a result of Gandhiji's decision to 'fast unto death'. At the Poet's institute, Shantiniketan, the 20th was observed as a day of fasting and prayer by all the inmates, young and old, including the Poet himself, who delivered a stirring address to a vast gathering of students and members of Vishva Bharati on the significance of Gandhiji's fast as a challenge to the nation to end an age-long social crime. Dressed in black robes, he delivered another momentous speech on Wednesday afternoon to a vast number of people assembled from far and near, in which he dwelt upon the significance of the coming of a Messiah and the meaning of the word Mahatma, and concluded

with an impassioned exhortation to do away, as a mark of homage to Gandhiji's great sacrifice, with all those social inequalities between man and man, which were at once India's sin and sorrow and in which India's enemies found their principal support. At the same time, an elaborate scheme for carrying on the work of uplift among the so-called lower and backward classes in the neighbourhood of Vishvabharati, was prepared under his inspiration and guidance and a number of students and staff of the Poet's University enrolled themselves for the work.

AS THE WEEK progressed there was quite an avalanche of news from all sides of temples, wells and public places being thrown open to the Depressed Classes. Wave of Self-purification Resolutions for doing away with all invidious distinctions in respect of the so-called 'un-

touchables' were adopted at mass meetings in thousands of places including Benares, the citadel of orthodoxy. A manifesto to the same effect was issued by the Pandit Sabha of Patna, which is a body composed mostly of orthodox Pandits. The famous Kalighat temple of Calcutta and the Ram Mandir of Benares were thrown open to the 'untouchables' at the very beginning of the week. In Delhi, the 'untouchables' were admitted to Hindu temples and there were scenes of fraternization between the Caste Hindus and the 'untouchables'. Students in many places organized themselves to fraternize with the Depressed Classes and to carry Gandhiji's gospel of the removal of untouchability into the villages. Appeals on behalf of Indian womanhood for complete purging of Hinduism of the taint of untouchability were issued over the signatures of a number of prominent Hindu ladies of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. In Bombay, the Gandhi Seva Sena, a nationalist women's organization, organized a ballot at seven prominent temples in the city. Women volunteers with white and black ballot boxes were posted at the temple gates and visitors to the temples were requested to cast their votes. Those who



supported temple entry for the 'untouchables' were requested to put a pebble in the white box, while those who were opposed to it were to put a pebble in the black box. A scrutiny of the boxes at the end of the ballot revealed the fact that 24,797 votes were cast in favour of temple entry for the Depressed Classes and only 445 against it. As a result, the bulk of these temples were thrown open to the 'untouchables'.

Nor was response lacking on the part of the Depressed Classes. In Calcutta, a meeting was held under the auspices of eleven Depressed Class organizations at which resolutions in favour of joint electorates for the Depressed Classes were passed. In Ahmedabad, as also in a number of other places, thousands of Depressed Class members fasted with Gandhiji on the 20th and took part in public demonstrations held in that connection, and resolutions in favour of joint electorates and against the Premier's decision were adopted at Depressed Class mass meetings in hundreds of places. In Bombay, however, the Commissioner of Police banned the holding of mass prayers at the Azad Maidan with the result that a series of meetings were held in twelve different places in the city and the suburbs. As an illustration of the extreme delicacy of the situation and the remarkable spirit of accommodation engendered by the threat of a national calamity may be mentioned the fact that the resolution, that was proposed to be adopted at the public meetings in Bombay calling upon the Premier to withdraw his scheme of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes, was abandoned without a second thought when Dr. Ambedkar objected to it on the ground that it had an appearance of propaganda against his party.

ALL EYES WERE now turned to Yeravda. Would the Government that had already grossly outraged the nation's

sentiment by withholding for so long the correspondence between Gandhiji, Sir Samuel Hoare and the Premier, now set Gandhiji

free to enable a settlement by agreement to be reached, or would

it simply sanctimoniously wash its hands of the whole affair and throw the entire burden of responsibility for the consequences on the Indian people themselves, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it'? that was the question that was asked on all sides. Prominent persons and bodies, widely diverging in their views in other respects, like Sjt. Ghanshyamdas Birla, the Non-Brahmin Ex-Minister Mr. B. V. Jadhav, Sjt. C. Y. Chintamani, the Indian Merchants' Chamber of Bombay, the Bombay Presidency Association, the members of the India League delegation, were all unanimous in demanding Gandhiji's immediate and unconditional release, and even a Tory paper like the 'Times' expressed the hope that Gandhiji would not be allowed to end his life in prison. A cryptic statement made by Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the Commerce Member of the Government of India, that "opportunities would no doubt arise for Mr. Gandhi to put forward his point of view to try to effect a change of opinion which he hoped for," encouraged the hope that Gandhiji would not have to commence his fast in prison. A simultaneous statement to the same effect of the Government's intentions was issued by the India Office in London which was cabled by Reuter to India. In fact it was freely rumoured in the lobby circles at Simla, that Gandhiji might be released earlier. But, obviously, some powerful sinister influence was at work somewhere and it prevailed.

ON THE DAY that Gandhiji commenced his fast, Mr. Haig, the Home Member of the Government of India, read in the Legislative Assembly the following telegram addressed by Gandhiji to the Private Secretary to H. E. the Viceroy:

Gandhiji to Re-  
main in Jail

"Have just read with considerable pain the announcement of the Government's decision to remove me on the commencement of my contemplated fast to an unknown private residence under certain restrictions. To avoid unnecessary trouble and

unnecessary public expense, and also unnecessary worry to myself, I would ask the Government not to disturb me, for I will be unable to conform to any conditions as to movement from place to place or otherwise that may be attached to my foreshadowed release."

In the course of his statement, the Home Member said, "Government, while on the whole, regretting Mr. Gandhi's decision, have no wish to force upon him arrangements which are distasteful to him. He will, therefore, in accordance with his request be allowed to remain undisturbed in the Yeravda Jail. At the same time Government are most anxious that this change of plan should not affect the opportunity for discussion of the Depressed Classes' problem which they had contemplated should be available for him. They have, therefore, decided that unless subsequent developments render any change necessary he should receive in jail all reasonable facilities for private interviews with such persons or deputations as he may wish to see and that there should be no restriction on his correspondence."

On the 15th September, *i. e.*, five days before the above statement was made, Mr. Haig had stated in the Assembly that "Mr. Gandhi would be removed to a suitable place of private residence as soon as he began his fast and that the only restriction imposed upon him would be that he should remain there." Interpreted in language more in conformity with what is taking place all over India at the present moment under the rule of the Special Powers Ordinances, this declaration simply meant that an order would be served upon Gandhiji at this 'suitable place of private residence', prohibiting him from leaving it under any circumstance. Later on it transpired, as is apparent from Gandhiji's telegram read in the Assembly, that this plan had been decided on without consulting Gandhiji himself. The idea of removing Gandhiji from jail was in keeping with the best traditions of a civilized Government. But to impose irksome restrictions upon him while he would be fasting himself to

death, was not a policy to which Gandhiji could legitimately be expected to submit. Gandhiji felt deeply hurt by the Home Member's statement on the 15th. It is not the purpose of this writer to argue that Government should have released Gandhiji unconditionally while they continued to be firm in their determination to crush him and the Congress. It was distasteful to Government to make any such large-hearted gesture. It was equally distasteful to Gandhiji to be asked to conform to arbitrary orders restricting his movements. It gave him supreme satisfaction to be left in peace in jail. The episode only served to add one more proof, if a proof was at all necessary, of what has almost become a commonplace of history that Britain knows how to acclaim successful rebels as national heroes but does not know how to act gracefully, not to say magnanimously, towards a powerful opponent in her power.

## V

### THE NATION'S TRAVAIL-II

A MATTER which caused no inconsiderable anxiety to the leaders who had begun to explore avenues of settlement was the question whether Gandhiji would agree to some form of reservation of seats. The uncertainty felt in many quarters on this point had given rise to utter despair. Any optimism was precluded by Dr. Ambedkar's bitter and uncompromising statements. While Gandhiji's clear statements on the question of joint electorates left<sup>1</sup> no alternative on that score, few people seemed to possess the courage to press Dr. Ambedkar, and even Rao Bahadur Rajah, to surrender the claims for a reservation of seats. Indeed, it was generally held that any such endeavour would be futile. On the one hand, Gandhiji's life was undoubtedly to be saved, on the other, unseemly haste which took no account of the vital issues at stake was to be avoided. There was to be no sacrifice of principle and certainly no appeal for mercy. Gandhiji had undertaken a course of self-immolation with the utmost deliberation, and it was clear as daylight to all his personal associates, as well as friends who did not see eye to eye with him on several

matters, that there was no retreat. Withal, many a heart was torn to pieces in a desperate effort to find a method of securing the one end without sacrificing the other. It was patent to all that Gandhiji was no protagonist of reservation of seats. But would Dr. Ambedkar even hear of anything else? In fact, would he hear even of joint electorates to begin with? That was the dilemma. It is betraying no secret to say that a bold escape from the dilemma had been planned in all seriousness regardless of consequences. Men and women of action had from the very commencement made the grim resolve to sponsor a scheme following the lines of Gandhiji's own wishes and rally round it the whole country, including the Depressed Classes, by a raging and tearing campaign before which all opposition was sure to collapse. But we knew that that would probably not save the life whose fate would hang perilously in the balance while the campaign was waged. We knew that the British Government as at present constituted was likely to prove itself unyielding to pressure of public opinion. In order that the prestige of His Majesty's Government should remain unimpaired, any way out of the ugly situation would have to satisfy the terms of declarations made by official spokesmen. Nevertheless, the aforesaid decision had been taken, and be it noted that right upto the last day of the negotiations we came repeatedly very near the necessity and probability of taking action on it.

BUT THOSE WHOSE composure never deserted them were determined to do nothing that history might record as unfair to

Deputationists  
Interview Gandhiji in Prison

Dr. Ambedkar and his party. Humanity would never have approved a plan which did not give them at the very start the fullest chance to save Gandhiji's life. In spite, therefore, of the clearly disappointing tone of Dr. Ambedkar's public statements it was decided to make an appeal to his better judgment. The venerable convener of the leaders' conference in Bombay, Pandit Malaviya, got into touch with Dr. Ambedkar without loss of time.

Meanwhile, the question of reservation of seats continued to vex people's minds. In London, Gandhiji had expressed his disapproval both of separate electorates as well as reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes. But it was pointed out now that had the matter ever reached a final stage of possible solution in London, Gandhiji would have surely accepted some sort of compromise on a system of joint electorates with reservation of seats. But to set doubts and trepidation at rest, the Citizens' Emergency Committee, that had come into being in Bombay as soon as Gandhiji's decision became known, decided to send a deputation to Gandhiji to discuss *inter alia* this particular point. Consequently, Sheth Mathuradas Vassanji, President of the Committee, Sir Chunilal Mehta, Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas, and Sjt. Ghanshyamdas Birla saw Gandhiji in jail. On the evening of Sunday the 18th, only two days ago, Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari had applied for an interview with Gandhiji, which was refused after a consultation between the Government of India and the Bombay Government. This refusal, after the explicit assurances given in the Legislative Assembly that Gandhiji would be given facilities to bring about an agreement, gave rise to serious misgivings in the minds of the people. Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari had applied for an interview about four days before the fast was actually to begin. The interview, had it taken place, would have undoubtedly cleared the air for a favourable settlement and enabled an earlier termination of the fast. The country was on the tiptoe of expectation. But the refusal came as a shock for which few were prepared. Two days later, on the 18th, the Bombay deputation was able to secure the necessary permission to see Gandhiji. The discrimination was for a while interpreted to mean that Congressmen would not be allowed to take part in the negotiations. This was obviously an absurd position for Government to take up, and it was rightly given up no sooner than it was adopted. From the 20th onward, no invidious distinctions were made.

THE INTERVIEW which had started late in the evening on Sunday remained unfinished on that day since it was carried on, on Gandhiji's side, in writing, he having already commenced his vow of silence from noon. The deputationists were reticent, and the only statement made was that further conversation would take place on the next day *i.e.* Monday the 19th at 12-45 p. m. when the silence would be over. This was bad news for a country which was already feeling heartbroken over the awful prospects of the immediate future. On Monday, the deputation met Gandhiji again at the stroke of 12-45. Later in the day, Sjt. Devadas Gandhi also had a long conversation with his father. The result of both the talks was gratifying, to say the least. Gandhiji immediately dispelled all doubts on the question of reservation of seats. He was opposed to it. He preferred a scheme, which would give the Hindu community the chance of returning to the legislature a sufficiently large number of Depressed Class representatives, to a statutory reservation of seats, which at best could be of doubtful advantage. Once statutory reservation was provided, Caste Hindus would feel little sense of responsibility of their own, and they would be denied the opportunity of giving ocular demonstration of their change of heart and manners towards the Depressed Classes by giving their candidates complete, voluntary support. But, should the voluntary scheme fail in its purpose and a much smaller number of Depressed Class candidates be returned, Gandhiji suggested that there should be provision for the allotment of additional seats by any suitable system that might be agreed upon. But much to the relief of the members of the deputation, Gandhiji assured them that he would not and could not make reservation of seats an issue in the fast, which would end as soon as separate electorates were replaced by joint electorates. This point had been made perfectly clear by Gandhiji in a letter addressed to the Bombay Government as early as the 15th. But, unfortunate-



ly, the letter was released on the 21st resulting in the loss of precious time. The letter in which Gandhiji explained his position in greater detail than in any other documents is published in Part II of this book. The reader is also referred to Part IV for opinions expressed by Gandhiji in London on the question of guaranteeing a satisfactory number of seats for the Depressed Classes to which reference has been made earlier in this narrative.

BUT THE INTERVIEWS with the deputation as also the interviews with Sjt. Devadas Gandhi were protracted. Gandhiji took the opportunity of warning the deputationists as also his son that he would not be satisfied with a mere political agreement between Caste Hindus and the Depressed Classes. He wanted untouchability to go once for all. And he made the declaration that if and when the inner voice gave the command he would not hesitate to undertake a similar fast again for the eradication of untouchability. He demanded a complete transformation in the centuries-old tradition which disfigured Hinduism. It was an animated talk he gave. His auditors, while feeling very much eased by Gandhiji's assurance on the question of reservation of seats, returned with heavy hearts. The Yeravda problem was far deeper and graver than the securing of a revision of the Prime Minister's Communal decision !

It was deemed imprudent to talk of the second peril while the country had hardly stopped rubbing its eyes on learning of the first. But there were men and women who did not disguise a certain feeling of satisfaction that Gandhiji had used the mightiest weapon in the Satyagraha armoury to deal a death-blow to untouchability. It was, of course, talked of only in whispers, but while the political negotiations took concrete shape oceans of emotion surged in the hearts of those who knew and understood the import of the conversations that took place in Yeravda Jail on the 19th. New resolves were made and

plans of action sketched out. The moral foundations of untouchability shook to their very depths. There was no getting away from a responsibility which we had been slow in realizing for all these years. Today there is not a Hindu but is placed in a frame of mind towards untouchability far, far different from what it was till only a few days ago.

TO COME TO Bombay, Gandhiji's assurance as regards reservation of seats placed a different complexion on the situation.

**Welcome Change in Dr. Ambedkar's Attitude** Public anxiety was now turned on Dr. Ambedkar. Would he say now, without a moment's hesitation, that he would be agreeable to joint electorates with reservation of seats? It was still thought futile even to talk of an alternative to the principle of reservation. This was indeed a sad fact of the situation. But Dr. Ambedkar's statements had given rise to the hope that a settlement was a certainty if Gandhiji made it clear that reservation was not an issue of the fast. Sjt. Amritlal Thakkar, an old friend of Dr. Ambedkar, had met the latter frequently during those fateful days, and reasoned with him with considerable success. The Doctor's statement that the Minorities Pact would not deter him from coming to any other settlement with the Caste Hindus may be said to have been the turning point in the negotiations for a settlement.

THE FIRST MEETING of the Hindu Leaders' Conference was held at noon on 19th September in the spacious hall of the

**The Conference at Bombay** Indian Merchants Chamber under the presidency of Pandit Malaviyaji, who in his opening speech announced amid applause that all

the temples in Allahabad had been thrown open to the 'untouchables'. Among other things the discussion revealed an absolute unanimity of opinion on two points: firstly, that Gandhiji's life must be saved at all cost; secondly, that the blot of untouchability must be removed from Hinduism at the earliest moment. Accordingly, a manifesto was drafted the next day, at the instance of Rao

Bahadur M. C. Rajah, to be signed by all present pledging themselves actively to fight untouchability till it was completely eradicated. With regard to the constitutional issues, however, as Dr. Ambedkar felt that he could not proceed further with the discussions till Gandhiji's terms were more definitely known the Conference was adjourned.

It met again at noon on the 20th in order to hear the deputation that had waited on Gandhiji in Poona. Sir Chunilal Mehta in a brief speech told the Conference that Gandhiji would not raise any personal objection to reservation of seats if they all came to the conclusion that it was necessary. Dr. Ambedkar was conciliatory. He said, although it was open to him to demand concrete proposals from Gandhiji he did not wish to do so at that stage. He would now consider proposals for a compromise, but he wanted it to be perfectly clear that he must not be expected to surrender. Sjt. Ghanshyandas Birla interposing said that it was the Hindus who wanted to surrender to him. After a little discussion the President adjourned the Conference to 3 p. m. next day.

## VI

### ENTERING THE FIERY GATES

"Servant of God, well done, well thou hast fought  
 The better fight, who single hast maintained  
 • Against revolted multitudes the cause  
 Of Truth, in word mightier than they in arms ;  
 And for the testimonies of Truth hast borne  
 Universal reproach, far worse to bear  
 Than violence ; for this was all they care  
 To stand approved in sight of God, though world's  
 Judged thee perverse." . . . . MILTON.

**W**HILE THE whole country outside was a seething, fermenting mass Gandhiji after the 13th had passed into a perfect calm and serenity of the spirit. After the fierce internal tempest with its thunderclaps and lurid lightnings had followed the pure deep blue of the sky with its golden sunshine and stillness and peace. Gandhiji's one concern now was to make the inner meaning of his resolve sun-clear to all concerned. This he did in a series of letters written to friends and inmates of the Ashram. He also explained his position in two statements, one made through the Government of Bombay on the 15th, the other to the press on the evening of the 20th. The first statement, however, was pigeon-

holed and remained forgotten in the Secretariat of the Bombay Government till the 21st, when it was rescued from there by importunate pressmen. These letters and the two statements contain in them almost a complete exposition of the science of Satyagraha by fasting; and a careful study of them would provide an answer to many a conundrum that has been propounded and still continues to be propounded on the subject.

"Fasting for light and penance," he explained in his statement of the 15th, "is a hoary institution. It can be observed commonly in Christianity and Islam, while Hinduism is replete with instances of fasting for purification. But it is a privilege if it is also a duty." "In my own case," he explained in a letter to the Ashram, "I have assumed this right for the present occasion. Having made a ceaseless effort to attain self-purification, I have developed some little capacity to hear correctly and clearly the 'still small voice within'. My present penance I have undertaken in obedience to this voice."

But who has explored all the dark mysteries of the human heart? Who knows whether deep down in it there may not be lurking, unknown to one, malice and anger and ill-will? When all is said and done may not such a penance be a hallucination as likely as it may be an illumination? "If it is the former," he argued, referring to his fast, "I should be allowed to do my penance in peace. It would be the lifting of a dead-weight on Hinduism. If it is an illumination, may my agony purify Hinduism and even melt the hearts of those who are at present disposed to distrust me."

It is not given to any mortal to see the whole light. But that can be no excuse for being half-hearted in the pursuit of the light that one has. If a man hesitates to follow with all his heart and all his soul the light as he sees it, fearing lest it might be a misleading will o' the wisp, he shall most likely be found with ungirt loin when the true light at last appears.

One must battle for the right, as it appears to one for the moment, with all the strength of one's soul. And this may sometimes necessitate the extreme sacrifice on one's part. Among the dim pathways of human action a mortal can only grope his way. But he dare not sit by the roadside. It is better to walk with bleeding feet than to be left in 'outer darkness'. It is enough if the staff that one leans upon is that of unalloyed truth and love, for truth and love never hurt. Satyagraha by making the extreme sacrifice is itself a passionate quest for truth right up to and beyond the portal of death. As a modern thinker has put it, death is also a solution when the alternative is perpetual compromise with uncertainty or with known wrong.

IS NOT SUCH an appeal a form of coercion, is it not likely to result in the suppression of reason and its subordination to mere emotionalism? Gandhiji's reply to it is **Is It Coercion?** emphatic. Love compels; it does not coerce. In the same way, truth too compels, and so does right, if once we acknowledge that right is might as it undisputably is. But surely one cannot describe the overpowering effect of love, of truth, or of right by the term coercion as it is commonly understood. The method of redemption from error by the vicarious suffering of the pure in heart is not a new one. It is as old as religion itself. What Satyagraha in these cases does is not to suppress reason but to free it from inertia and to establish its sovereignty over prejudice, hatred, anger and other baser passions. In other words, if one may paradoxically put it, it does not enslave; it compels reason to be free. It dissolves the mists of mutual mistrust and suspicion that obscure it and lends weight and perspective to it by setting the final seal on the sincerity and earnestness of its appeal. "My fast I want to throw in the scale of justice," declared Gandhiji in his statement of the 20th. "This may look childish to the on-lookers, but not so to me. If I had anything more to give, I

would throw in that also to remove this curse, but I have nothing more than my life."

BUT SUCH Satyagraha cannot be used against anybody and everybody. There must be a common bond, some meeting-ground

between you and those against whom it is used.  
Against Whom Directed

"The impending fast," he explained, referring to the aspect of the question in another place, "is against those who have faith in me, whether Indians or foreigners, and not for those who have it not. Therefore, it is not against the English official world, but it is against those Englishmen and women who, in spite of the contrary teaching of the official world, believe in me and the justice of the cause I represent. Nor is it against those of my countrymen who have no faith in me, whether they be Hindus or others, but it is against those countless Indians, no matter to what persuasion they belong, who believe that I represent a just cause. Above all, it is intended to sting the Hindu conscience into right religious action."

ON THE 18TH noon, he commenced his weekly 24 hours' silence. He received the weekly post from the Ashram and dic-

tated a number of letters explaining to the inmates of the Ashram as to what he expected of them in that crisis. To one of them he wrote :

"Fasting unto death by way of Satyagraha is the acme of the Ashram ideal. But it is a privilege that accrues very rarely and to the selectest few only. Let not the daily Ashram routine therefore suffer even a second's interruption, and let no one feel any sorrow or anxiety on my score. But let everybody make a ceaseless effort to make himself or herself fit for the final and supreme sacrifice. My own fitness for it is yet on the touch-stone. How true is Solon's saying that no one can be considered happy before his death ! Who knows but deep down in me there are still lurking malice and anger and my penance is therefore in its nature as the Gita puts it 'devilish' or begotten of darkness.

In that event, I hope that you will be able to bear at least this much testimony that the hatred and anger were all unconscious and that my penance was undertaken from the purest of motives and with good-will towards all."

"I expect all sisters," he wrote in a letter dated the 19th of September to Mrs. Jamnalal Bajaj, full of delicate banter, "to go forth like wandering friaresses, fraternizing with the 'untouchables' till the bar sinister is completely removed, and thereby prove themselves verily to be the chosen instruments for fulfilling the Divine will. But supposing their efforts prove in vain, well, in that case this earthly tabernacle of mine may collapse. But I shall live so long as there is a single sister actively carrying on my mission. Here is then immortality, not in the mystical spiritual sense of the Gita but in the physical sense also, capable of ocular demonstration. Mind you, therefore,—no perturbation or giving way to grief. Let perfect resignation of the body, mind and soul to His will be your staff."

To another member of the Ashram he wrote :

"Inscrutable are the ways of Providence. I feel that I am only dancing to His tune. I, therefore, feel light and buoyant in spirit. How perfect it would be if I could remain so till the very end of the ordeal ! But I have resigned myself entirely to His will. I wish that all at the Ashram would remain cheerful and buoyant till the very end and unperturbed in the performance of their fixed duties. And the royal road to that is an absolute dedication to the immediate duty on hand."

To still another he wrote :

"Do we not in the Ashram everyday rehearse the lesson of renouncing attachment to the flesh ? Now is the time to prove that we have really assimilated that lesson. Let there not be, therefore, any anxiety or vain sorrow on my account. Rather you should all rejoice that it has been given to one of your



members to go through the final test. You should all wish and pray that He may show me the way to come out of the ordeal successfully. It is easy, comparatively speaking, to take the plunge, but how many swim across and reach the other shore? Whilst therefore no one may feel elated before the end, I feel secure in the faith that He in whose name the work was undertaken will also bring it to a successful issue."

HE WARNED ALL friends and sympathisers against copying him blindly or out of false or hysterical sympathy. To all such,

his advice was to qualify themselves by hard  
 More Heart-      work and selfless service of the 'untouchables'  
 searchings      and they would have independent light when

their time for fasting came. Lastly, he strongly deprecated the use of violence in any shape or form against those who were supposed to be inimical to him or the cause he represented. "My fast for me," he stated, "is an expression of and the last seal on non-violence. Any lapse from the strictest non-violence would simply hasten my end."

Earnest messages, entreaties and appeals poured in from all sides asking Gandhiji to reconsider his decision, or at least to postpone its execution to give some breathing time to the country to mobilize public opinion and successfully tackle a question that had baffled solution so long. To all these his reply was that the decision had been taken in the name of God, for His work, and in obedience to His call. He had, therefore, no power to recall it or to postpone the hour of execution thereof, except for reasons stated in his letter to the Prime Minister. To those who complained that he had not given a sufficient notice to the country, which he in fairness was bound to do, he replied that as a prisoner he had no right to communicate with the outside world. He had informed the Government about his intention to fast. It was for the Government then to let the people know about it. "If they did not do so earlier we may rest assured," he argued, "that God did not will it otherwise." To Sir Tej Bahadur

Sapru, who asked him to refrain from fasting till he had made at least one more attempt to settle the Depressed Classes' question and appealed that he must live to remove the blot from Hinduism, he wired the reply that it was just his helplessness that had prompted his resolve and that if God willed it his body would hold out against the fast long enough for a settlement which Sir Tej and other friends outside could negotiate alone. "Have I not the Hindu heart," he queried in anguish, in replying to an invitation on behalf of the Servants of India Society to stay in their Home during his fast, "and have we not all deserved the most terrible chastisement from God for our treatment of the 'untouchables' ? And so He is trying me through and through before admitting me to the untouchable fold. It has been an effort for the last fifty years."

IMPORTUNED another friend: "Is not your fast a sin against proportion? Are you not betraying a lapse from your usual sense of balance and relevancy in treating the more make-shifts of political expediency on the part of the British Prime Minister as an altar worthy of so costly a sacrifice? Had you seven lives to give to expiate the sin of many centuries, I would not have stood in the way of your sacrificing them all. But for any lesser need you have not the sanction of those to whom your life is pledged, to bequeath it except in a daily renewal of long service to the world." To this importunate appeal, his reply was characteristic. "I am afraid," he observed, "personal affection has warped your vision. The Premier's decision was only the last straw. The conception of giving my life for the 'untouchables' is not of yesterday, it is very old. But for years there was no call from within. The Cabinet's decision came like a violent alarm waking me from my slumber and telling me 'this is the time'. It, therefore, provided the psychological moment and I instinctively seized it." He even proceeded to make a last will and testament of his faith, as it were. "If I die, I shall die in the faith

A Testament  
of Faith

that I shall leave behind comrades. . . . . with whom God has blessed me, who will continue the work of the country which is also fully the work of humanity in the same spirit in which it was begun. If the interests of the country are to be one with those of humanity, if the good of one faith is to be the good of all faiths, it will come by the strictest adherence to truth and non-violence in thought, word and deed."

What was it that sustained him in his hour of crisis? It was, as he put it, the consciousness that the prayers of the innocent and the pure in heart were with him. "You must not consider me so proud," he wrote to one correspondent, "as not to need the prayers of friends, comrades and playmates. Indeed is God nearer to me than the air which surrounds me and which I breathe. But I sense His visible presence in the prayers of the innocent. They sustain me. Do, therefore, pray that He may give me the strength to pass through the fiery ordeal that awaits me."

THE FATEFUL twentieth of September arrived at last. He rose early in the small hours of the morning as usual and had his favourite 'Vaishnava Jana' sung at the morning prayer, with its haunting refrain :

At the Stroke  
of Twelve

"He alone is the true Vaishnava,  
Who knows and feels for another's woe."

He had his usual meal of milk and fruit in the morning. From 6-30 to 8 a.m. he had the Gita recited to him by one of his companions. At 11-30 a.m. he had his last meal of lemon-juice and honey with hot water. The fatal hour approached. The little group prepared themselves for the ordeal by singing a beautiful song sent to Gandhiji by Shrimati Raihanaben, the eldest daughter of Sjt. Abbas Tyabji, the Grand Old Man of

Gujarat :

“ O Traveller, arise, it is dawn,  
Where is the night that thou still sleepest ? ”

The jail bell at last struck twelve and with its last stroke was finally sealed a decision as fixed as the Pole Star and as irrevocable as fate. Gandhiji's 'tussle with God' had commenced.

On the evening of the same day, he gave a press interview for the first time in eight months since his incarceration. In it he explained the world significance of his fast. “ I believe that if untouchability is rooted out,” he stated, “ it will not only purge Hinduism of a terrible blight but its repercussion will be worldwide. My fight against untouchability is a fight against the impure in humanity, and therefore, when I penned my letter to Sir Samuel Hoare I did so in the full faith that the very best in the human family will come to my assistance, if I have embarked on this thing with a heart—so far as it is possible for a human being to achieve—free of impurity, free of all malice and all anger. You will, therefore, see that my fast is based first of all on faith in my cause, faith in the Hindu community, faith in human nature itself and faith even in the official world.” “ My cry,” he concluded, “ will rise to the throne of the Almighty God.”

## VII

### ON THE FIERY BED

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat the  
hidden manna . . . . "

*Revelation II, 17*

**G**REAT ANXIETY was felt when Gandhiji commenced his fast whether he would be able to stand the physical strain of it for any length of time. For one thing, he was not the same man as he was when he undertook his twenty-one days' fast at Delhi in 1924. He was eight years older now, which means a great deal to one who is already over sixty. Moreover, it was one thing to fast at 'Dilkash', near the Ridge, a free man, under the loving custodianship of a Charlie Andrews and the expert care of doctors like Ansari, Jivraj Mehta and Abdurehman, who knew his constitution and personal habits intimately, and quite another thing to fast in a segregated special yard in the Yeravda Prison under the surveillance of the jail authorities, who perhaps knew how to deal with a recalcitrant prisoner refusing to take food, but certainly had no experience of long fasts or of fasting men of Gandhiji's type. In fairness to them it must be

The Ordeal  
Begins

admitted that so far as personal solicitude for Gandhiji was concerned they, from the very highest, left nothing to be desired. But they were handicapped by the red-tapism of jail regulations, and not even the best will in the world could take the place of specialized experience. For instance, one is amazed to learn, to mention only one instance, that till the second day of his fast Gandhiji had to walk to the office, every time that a visitor wanted to see him, instead of the visitors being taken to his bed-side, and he had to move the Inspector General of Prisons in order to get the necessary change in the arrangements made.

On the morning of the 21st he was removed to a special, segregated yard. There, under the thick shade of a low mango tree, on a white iron cot on which was spread a jail mattress and a jail bedsheet, he remained for the greater part of the day. His two companions, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Sjt. Mahadev Desai, were there with him. Around the cot were placed a number of chairs for visitors. Near the cot, on one side, was a stool on which was to be found a rum collection of odds and ends, books, papers, writing material, bottles of water, soda-bicarb and salt. From time to time, he would pour out some water from one of the bottles, in which he would dissolve soda and salt and sip it slowly according to need and inclination. Mrs. Naidu had been specially brought there from the female prison. When the present writer visited Gandhiji on the afternoon of the 21st, she had already constituted herself his bodyguard. She mothered him throughout the fast and stood sentry over him from morning till evening, exercising a mother's and nurse's prescriptive right to 'tyrannize' over her ward and the entire household.

Gandhiji was as buoyant and cheerful as ever, and outwardly hardly betrayed any signs of a man who is racing against time and is being rushed with every second towards the abyss of the beyond. But to a close observer it did not take long to

discover how fully conscious he was of the grim reality facing him. During his Delhi fast, for instance, one could not help being struck by the way in which he economized his strength. He had reduced it to a science. But now he simply did not mind. It was a limited fast then. He knew the period that he had to pull through. The present fast was going to be a 'fast unto death'. If he survived it, it would not be so much because of the efficacy of the medical measures that might be adopted but because God willed it. It was predominantly a spiritual wrestle in which the physical factor played only a secondary part. Although the jail authorities had allowed him to have his own nurses, one could notice that he was extremely reluctant to avail himself of their services. What mattered a few more pangs or less of physical suffering to a man who was thirsting only for the grace abounding of the Almighty, and who in any case would soon be beyond all pain? Nor could Gandhiji forget even for a moment that he was still a prisoner and that whatever facilities he was allowed were by way of a privilege. And everybody who has come in close touch with Gandhiji knows how disinclined temperamentally he is to avail himself of any special privileges of this kind. The whole of the twenty-first, he walked from his bed to the bath room, everytime that he had to visit it. He continued this till the afternoon of the 22nd, even though he had to take the support of his nurses. At his bath he declined to take any assistance. It was only on the 22nd, when his strength had altogether fizzled out that he resigned himself to these nursing aids with a sigh. During his Delhi fast, he used to take water with scientific precision, hourly. On the present occasion, he did it only in a haphazard way. The physical exertion as also the strain caused by speaking, induced nausea at an early stage. As the fast proceeded and the body tissue burnt away, his whole frame was racked by excruciating aches—those terrible aches which at Delhi had to be alleviated by frequent massage and shampoo and a variety of other means. But this time he was

indifferent about massaging. It was only towards the close, after Mrs. Gandhi's arrival, that he agreed to have it at all, more for her than for his own satisfaction. Later on a special masseur was sent by some friends to give him the massage. This had, as it always has, a very soothing effect.

WARNING SIGNALS were not, however, lacking to remind all concerned that there was a limit beyond which flesh and

A Warning blood could not go. The physical exhaustion  
Signal grew with every hour that passed. The voice grew feebler. Only when now and then in the course of animated discussions, his eyes shone and the face lit up that one felt the presence of an indomitable will that had remained unaffected in spite of the ravages on the body. From the 22nd onwards, he had to be removed from one place to another on a stretcher to conserve his energy.

• On the 24th, Dr. Gilder and Dr. Patel of Bombay after examining Gandhiji in consultation with the jail doctors opined that the margin of safety would soon be passed if unnecessary interviews and the strain of negotiations that were being carried on with him were not stopped. The blood pressure stood alarmingly high. The general condition showed distinct signs of an impending downward plunge. The report added that once the margin of safety was passed, even if the fast was broken his life would still be in danger.

An anxious consultation was held among those around Gandhiji and the jail authorities. It was impressed upon the jail authorities that Gandhiji needed constant nursing in the night time, that during his Delhi fast he had to be helped every-time that he wanted even to turn his side. The Government had already intimated to Gandhiji on the 22nd that he could have his own doctors by him if he liked. But while thanking the Government for the offer, he had replied that he had full faith in the jail medical staff. They naturally felt greatly concerned. At last, it was decided, among other things, that two of his close



associates should stay with him during the night time as well. This arrangement continued till the 29th evening, when all the old restrictions were reimposed upon him.

On the 26th the prognosis became alarming and Gandhiji had to be given injections of soda-bicarb dissolved in water by enema twice under the instructions of the doctors in charge. The Poet had arrived from Calcutta that day. Gandhiji, who never misses an opportunity of hearing the Poet sing some of his own songs and on whom music has always a very soothing effect when he is experiencing physical suffering, suggested to Col. Doyle that he should be allowed to have some music as music to him was a medical necessity. This permission was accorded to him. Again, on the evening of the 27th and the 28th, he had some of his favourite devotional hymns sung to him to the accompaniment of instrumental music by some friends who came specially from the city for the purpose.

But whilst on the physical side, Gandhiji's attitude towards the fast was characterized by utter resignation tempered with humility, on the spiritual side it was characterized by an intensity and vehemence of assault that was unprecedented.

THE MORNING and evening prayer appointments were kept as punctiliously as ever, Gandhiji always sitting up in his bed for prayer, and the hum of the spinning wheel did not cease even for a single day during the fast. From early in the morning, as soon as the jail opened, an endless round of interviews, meetings with friends and visitors, and consultations with the members of the Conference that was deliberating outside, would commence and continue—with a brief lull at noon, when he would have bath and enema and steal a brief nap—till late in the night sometimes. To this was added the pressure of attending to his daily mail bag. Letters, telegrams, messages containing all sorts of suggestions, philosophical conundrums, and even personal requests came pouring in in increasing

volume till they threatened to swamp Gandhiji's little secretariat in the Yeravda Prison. Gandhiji would dictate replies to such of them as needed a reply. "I am convinced," he wrote to one correspondent explaining the object of his fast, "that orthodoxy would be reconciled to the reform if it comes stealthily. The Premier's decision threatened to violently interrupt this silent process of conversion. My fast is intended to remove this obstacle in the way. It is only a preparation for a living pact between the Caste Hindus and the 'untouchables' that would result in a complete abolition of the 'fifth caste'." To another who wanted to go on fast to get some grievances of the 'untouchables' against the Caste Hindus removed, he wrote that he might fast if he had earned the right by service of the 'untouchables' and felt 'the call within'. William Shirer, an American journalist who like many a pressman had come into contact with him in the pursuit of his profession but developed a warm personal attachment to him and his ideals, sent him a long cable from Vienna telling him how American opinion was profoundly befuddled by his fast. Had not Gandhiji often said that as the leader of the Congress he represented nationalist Hindus, Muslims, Parsees and Christians, that he would die for India? Was he not now deliberately throwing away his undisputed political leadership by dying for only one class of Indians and for a religious principle which non-Hindus had no right to judge, thus leaving nationalism to die? Was not the struggle for Swaraj, as he had often told the world, above all religious groups? America wanted a reply. Gandhiji's reply to this which is given in full in Part III was characteristic. His politics, he explained, were derived from his religion, and nationalism would be the stronger for his sacrificial death which would thus set a final seal on his political leadership. . . . . His sacrifice was calculated to promote the deliverance of humanity from untouchability in every shape or form, and, therefore, it served all religious groups. "If, then," he concluded,

"America which has sent me through her known and unknown representatives so much sympathy in my distress now understands the inwardness of the sacrifice, I expect her to mobilize world opinion in favour of the sacrifice which, though apparently conceived to apply to a corner of this world, is really intended to cover the whole world."

Harijans as well as workers in the cause of untouchability came seeking his expert advice and guidance and were never turned back, however weak or physically exhausted he was. "I am the trustee of such and such a temple," would say one such, "tell me how I can tackle this or that difficulty." "I am running such and such an institution," another told him, "we do everything with our own hands which enables us to live on a couple of rupees per month. We observe no distinction between caste and outcast. I promise to give you five hundred devoted workers in the cause of untouchability." Such things and the reports of the tremendous wave of reform that was sweeping over the country outside, were a veritable tonic to him during the fast. To his fiery bed likewise flocked enthusiastic youths from colleges, sisters, in simple faith from far and near, and little children, Gandhiji's universal friends and playmates, who could always claim access to him whenever he had a moment to spare. Outside the jail gates, a vast concourse of people could be seen at all hours of the day. Regulating admissions to Gandhiji's presence imposed a terrible strain on the already overworked jail staff which, however, they faced ungrudgingly and joyfully as a labour of love.

Thus it went on till the closing time for jail. At night, exhausted by the day's strain he would retire to sleep under the canopy of heaven, contemplating the various burning stars and constellations, an exercise which he extremely loves. But what his spirit was yearning to have a glimpse of from his bed of physical agony were not these outward astronomical signs but far, far beyond them the face of his Maker.

ON THE 22ND, Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi, whose sentence was due shortly to expire, was transferred from the Sabarmati Prison to Yeravda and permitted to attend on him. She was superb. Calm and collected as ever, she did not betray the slightest trace of agitation or grief. "Again, the same old story," she remarked as she greeted him with forced banter that could, however, hardly conceal what must have been to her a terrible ordeal of the soul. She promptly took charge of Gandhiji's little improvised nursing establishment. Shrimati Kamala Nehru and Swarup Rani Nehru came to see him on the 25th. "Newspaper men have insulted me," the former protested to Gandhiji in her characteristic manner, "by giving out that on hearing the news of your fast I had fallen ill and taken to bed. How could I afford to fall ill when the supreme need of the hour was action and more action." Shrimati Swarup Rani Nehru, a strictly orthodox lady, so very punctilious and conservative in her observances that throughout the life of her illustrious husband she had maintained a separate, orthodox kitchen for herself, told Gandhiji that she had, before leaving Allahabad, accepted *prasad* from the hands of the 'untouchables'. All through the journey, she told him in her simple unaffected manner, she had busied herself with reading the Ramayan and prayer. It was an additional source of comfort and consolation to him to have by his side Shrimati Vasanti Devi Das and Urmila Devi who came down from Calcutta on the 26th to visit him and in whom he saw represented, as it were, his departed colleague and comrade in the struggle for Swaraj.

THE 26TH MARKED, too, the culminating point in the inner spiritual struggle. That day, in response to a request by Mr. Laurence Housman, the celebrated poet and dramatist, Gandhiji sent the following agonized message to be read at a special meeting held in London on the

27th under the auspices of the Friends of India in celebration of his fast :

"My fast is an appeal not merely to Hindus and India in general but to British conscience, indeed, to the whole world. This distrust of and misrepresentation about a man who loves British people is an enigma to me. Since my deepest faith forbids resort to physical force, I am praying God to discover to me such final way of corporate suffering of an extreme kind and to give me strength to undergo it. When, if required, such time comes I know it will penetrate every British home. I had hoped that appeal from this fiery bed would somewhat wake up British public as it seems to have marvellously roused India. But God's will was perhaps otherwise. Wanting British sympathy and help I would value anything your meeting may do. I know I have the silent sympathy and prayer of thousands of British men and women."

## VIII

### COMING TO GRIPS

**M**EANWHILE, the negotiations appeared to drag on their weary course at Bombay. The Hindu Leaders' Conference on the 20th having adjourned, Birla House became the scene of intense activity. Leaders conferred anxiously while the hours ceaselessly rushed by. Gandhiji's fast had begun and there was no recalling his decision. Dr. Ambedkar and his colleague, Dr. Solanki, met Pandit Malaviya, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Congress President Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari, Sir Chunilal Mehta, Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas, Sheth Mathuradas Vassanji, Sjt. Ghanshyamdas Birla, Mr. Jayakar, Dr. Moonje, Sjt. T. Prakasam, Babu Rajendra Prasad and many others. The Doctor, in spite of great persuasion, was not found willing to agree to joint electorates. At the end of a very protracted discussion, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru suggested the adoption of a system of primary and secondary election for a limited number of seats in order to meet Dr. Ambedkar's objection to simple joint electorates. He said it would help to allay the legitimate fear of the Depressed Classes. The system, while maintaining the principle of joint electorates, would enable the Depressed

Classes to choose their own candidates. Dr. Ambedkar and his colleague, to the agreeable surprise of all, welcomed the proposal but said that they would demand a much larger number of total seats than the Prime Minister's Award had given them. The proposal as agreed to finally by Dr. Ambedkar was that in respect of the 71 seats offered by the Prime Minister through separate electorates, the Depressed Class community should elect for each seat a panel of not less than three candidates, who should stand as the chosen candidates of the Depressed Classes, for the single seat in the general constituency. In respect of the extra seats demanded by Dr. Ambedkar, the principle of reservation of seats under joint electorates would apply.

The advantage of the scheme was that the Depressed Classes would have the initial opportunity of expressing their approval of a candidate who would stand for election in the general body. On the other hand, the principle of joint electorates would be fully secured by the fact that the final voice would be that of the general electorates.

Late in the evening, at the end of hours of negotiation, Dr. Ambedkar and Dr. Solanki left Birla House promising to return within two or three hours with a draft scheme, embodying Sir Tej Bahadur's suggestions and certain other points. But the rest of the gathering did not disperse at once. The question seriously debated was: Would this scheme be acceptable to Gandhiji? Everything turned on the answer to that question. Nobody could be quite sure. Sir Tej Bahadur declined to dissect his own proposals which he had made probably in a moment of sudden inspiration. "Take it or reject it," he said. "Personally I feel that the plan should satisfy every requirement. But it all depends on how your minds react to it. I don't want anything more." He then proceeded to ask each individual what he felt about the scheme in terms of Mahatmaji's vow.

I MUST RECORD here very definitely that after the Bombay deputation's clear assurance as regards Gandhiji's

<p>A Question of Honour and Loyalty</p>	<p>attitude towards reservation of seats, Dr. Ambedkar's apparently uncompromising attitude towards joint electorates in the private negotiations at Birla House in the afternoon of</p>
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the 20th had caused keen disappointment and even resentment. It was the common concern of everyone present in the talks that any effort to save Gandhiji's life should be worthy of the loyalty each one of them owed to Gandhiji as a friend. Loyalty was indeed on its trial. And this was the one fact of which everyone was supremely conscious. It was not without fear and trembling that one agreed to allow negotiations to approach honour's margin of safety. But it was no part of preservation of honour to be callous to the will of the nation that Gandhiji's life should be saved or to Dr. Ambedkar's obvious eagerness to accommodate the negotiators without appearing to be surrendering to coercion. To respect the feeling of a doughty fighter is one of the elementary virtues of Satyagraha. From this point of view, Gandhiji's associates gave a ready response to Sir Tej.

After very careful consideration, the Birla House group came to the unanimous conclusion that it was their clear duty to take the scheme to Gandhiji and humbly offer it for his acceptance. It gave no little relief to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, when in the end, Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari, Babu Rajendra Prasad, Sjt. Ghanshyamdas Birla and Sjt. Devadas Gandhi offered even to plead with Gandhiji for its acceptance. Mr. Jayakar was a strong protagonist, Pandit Malaviya heartily blessed the proposal and convinced Dr. Moonje of its soundness, while Mr. N. C. Kelkar, who came in later, seemed also to approve of the scheme. Finally, Pandit Malaviya with the enthusiasm of a child gave marching orders for Poona. It was time for dinner, and most of those present had fasted the whole day. A sense of relief at the discovery of a formula coupled with the presenti-



ment that it would meet with at least a measure of Gandhiji's approval brought on the consciousness of hunger and the company dispersed for dinner.

THE FOLLOWING persons left for Poona by the midnight train :

To Poona            Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari,  
                         Sjt. M. R. Jayakar, Sjt. Ghanshyamdas

Birla, Babu Rajendra Prasad, and Sjt. Devadas Gandhi. Before sunrise on the 21st they were in Lady Vithaldas's bungalow in Poona. The interview with Gandhiji was timed at 7 o'clock. It took place in one of the office rooms of the jail. Gandhiji greeted the party with his usual hearty laugh, but he looked decidedly weaker after the 24 hours' fast. Sitting at the centre of the table, he said, "I preside." Mrs. Sarojini Naidu also participated in the discussion. She looked anxious, but her face lit up with a smile at the sight of so many familiar faces. She tried her best, without attracting Gandhiji's attention, to ask everyone of the deputation, "What have you brought?" The answer was not so simple. Sir Tej Bahadur opened the discussion. He explained the scheme. Gandhiji listened in silence. It was impossible to read anything in his face. Others put in a few words of support and explanation. Gandhiji interrupted the talk only on one or two occasions in order to elucidate some points. Then at the end of about half an hour he spoke: "I am prepared to consider your plan favourably," he said. "The idea of the panel does not disturb me. But I should like to have the whole picture before me in writing." With this the battle was half won. Words cannot describe the satisfaction felt by everyone present. Sir Tej could hardly disguise his delight at the response Gandhiji had given. But Gandhiji had not finished. "Before I make up my mind I must see, if possible, Dr. Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur Rajah. I may see my way much clearer when I have known their minds."

The conversation then turned to his health. The walk from

his cell upto the office had shown that he was losing strength more rapidly than was expected. The Superintendent had as yet received no instructions as to the manner in which Gandhiji was to be treated during the fast. But he assured the deputationists that arrangements would be made to allow Gandhiji to see visitors in his own yard.

An hour later, Gandhiji, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Sjt. Mahadev Desai were shifted to a yard very near to the main entrance of the jail. The first interview he had in the mango tree yard was with Sjt. Rajabhoj, the well-known Depressed Class leader of Poona, and his companions. They pledged their support to Gandhiji who, in his turn, told them that they would be justified in demanding fullest possible reparations from the Hindus for the sin of untouchability.

No definite announcement was made to the press as regards the outcome of the early morning interview which had so materially allayed the anxiety of the members of the deputation. Nothing was known in Bombay throughout the whole day. The adjourned Conference met at three and adjourned again. The President, Pandit Malaviya, went down to Poona by car. Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah, who had been summoned, also hastened to Poona.

WEDNESDAY night passed without an incident. Dr. Ambedkar, who had been urgently summoned by Sir Tej Bahadur

A Day of Surprises	Sapru at the personal request of Gandhiji, readily agreed to come to Poona. This news brought great relief all over the country. It
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was felt that a personal interview between Dr. Ambedkar and Gandhiji would work wonders. But Thursday was a day of surprises. And the very first surprise in the early morning was not a pleasant one either. An urgent telephone call at 4, Mangaldas Road, summoned Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari and Babu Rajendra Prasad to the jail. Gandhiji had slept over the written scheme

presented to him by Mr. Jayakar the previous day. He had also seen the draft scheme published by Dr. Ambedkar. He was unhappy. "There is a serious flaw in this. I don't like it," he began saying. "This will again divide the 'untouchables' into two separate groups. There will be the panel group in the legislatures, and the other group which will come in by direct election. There will always be a glamour about the panel seats, which will result in the creation of a superiority and an inferiority complex among the Depressed Classes. I cannot be party to that."

The argument was unanswerable. No one attempted an answer. Gandhiji proceeded: "I cannot possibly swallow part two. All the claims made in it must be met, but it cannot go into the constitution." Part two demanded, among other things, that the Depressed Classes "shall be allowed representation in the Municipalities, Local Boards, District Taluk and Village unions etc. on the population basis and that in the public services, central and provincial, they shall be guaranteed appointments according to their population ratio as a minimum." Mrs. Naidu, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Sjt. Mahadev Desai were there. They knew that Gandhiji had a way out of the difficulty, which would surely prove acceptable to Dr. Ambedkar and his group, whether it proved so to everybody else or not. They were not, therefore, the unhappy ones in the yard at the moment. Then Gandhiji made his proposal which was the second great surprise of the day. "You have got to tell me," he said, addressing Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari and Babu Rajendra Prasad, "whether the system of primary elections is an evil. If it is, then we can have nothing to do with it. But, on the other hand, if you are prepared to tolerate it for a certain number of seats, I would ask you to consider why it should not be extended to the whole of the seats. It is to tell you this that I sent an urgent message asking you to see me. You have now got to decide for me. If you think that we cannot extend the panel system to all the

seats, then I feel that we should not tolerate it for a certain number of seats either. But discuss that among yourselves and tell me how you feel about it finally. " ~

The interview closed there. Then followed a brief consultation with Sardar Patel and Mrs. Naidu, and then immediate departure for Pandit Malaviya's residence, at No. 1, Ramakrishna Bhandarkar Road. Another surprise awaited them there. Sir Tej, Mr. Jayakar and Sjt. Ghanshyamdas Birla were in close conclave with Pandit Malaviya. The two first named had seen Dr. Ambedkar at his residence in Poona. There was disappointment in Mr. Jayakar's tone, and many an uncharitable remark was passed about Dr. Ambedkar by the various persons present. The writer neither recollects nor would it serve any useful purpose to record the various extra demands made by Dr. Ambedkar and his friends. Suffice it to say that the atmosphere of hopefulness of the previous day gave place to one of despair now. But as Pandit Malaviya, Sir Tej Bahadur and Mr. Jayakar were expected at the jail, they along with others repaired thither. Sjt. Rajagopalachari and Babu Rajendra Prasad had no time to inform them that while something strange had happened on Dr. Ambedkar's side, something equally, if not more, strange had materialized under the mango tree. It seemed best also to allow them to have their surprise firsthand from Gandhiji himself. The interview did not last very long. Sir Tej Bahadur and Mr. Jayakar were not prepared for the tremendous surprise Gandhiji gave them. They listened in silence and dismay while Gandhiji repeated what he had said earlier in the day. In point of fact, the crowded events of the past two days outside the jail had given nobody any time to think at leisure. But Gandhiji, though the busiest man still, had outstripped the rest. His suggestion might easily have come from everybody else a little later. It was now midday, and the little gathering in the jail dispersed. At lunch, it was decided that Dr. Ambedkar also should have his surprise

direct from Gandhiji, Mr. Jayakar remarking, "His intransigence will collapse when he sees Mahatma Gandhi."

IN THE MEANTIME, Gandhiji had an important conversation with Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah and Sjt. P. Baloo of Bombay.

Rao Bahadur Rajah      It must be remembered that Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah is a member nominated by

Government to represent the Depressed Classes in the Legislative Assembly. After the second Round Table Conference, he together with Dr. Moonje, who acted on behalf of the Hindu Mahasabha, sponsored a scheme of joint electorates with reservation of seats on a population basis for the Depressed Classes. The scheme is now well-known as the Rajah-Moonje Pact. On the publication of the Communal decision of His Majesty's Government on the 17th of August, the Rajah-Moonje Pact came in for a great deal of public attention. For one thing, a large number of seats promised to the Depressed Classes in the pact made it a formidable rival to the rather disappointing nature of the Government decision on the subject. Gandhiji's fast, therefore, brought this Pact into great prominence again. With certain necessary modifications, it would certainly have won the adherence of the Caste Hindus as well as large numbers of the Depressed Classes of every school of thought. But the pact was not the topic of the conversation. Gandhiji was particular that the opinion of Rao Bahadur Rajah on the proposed system of primary election should be ascertained before any progress in the negotiations was made. But the Rao Bahadur had already made up his mind in favour of the scheme, if only to facilitate an agreement. Rao Bahadur Rajah and Sjt. P. Baloo assured Gandhiji that they would leave no stone unturned to secure an agreement which would satisfy him. But they pointed out that it was necessary to take more drastic measures to place the Depressed Classes on an equal footing with the Caste Hindus. Gandhiji, in his turn, assured them of his determination to see it through. Before he departed, Sjt. P.

Baloo remarked to Gandhiji: "Your life is a greater guarantee to the Depressed Classes than any number of constitutions."

WHEN, LATE IN the afternoon, Drs. Ambedkar and Solanki saw Gandhiji, they were accompanied by most of the leaders pre-

The Ultimate sent in Poona. Dr. Ambedkar had not shaken  
Test off completely the attitude indicated by some

of his previous statements. This is not to say that he was at all impolite. "Mahatmaji, you have been very unfair to us," he began. "It is always my lot to appear to be unfair," replied Gandhiji, "I cannot help it." The conversation was protracted. Gandhiji lay weak and still in his bed, and Dr. Ambedkar did most of the talking. The one sentence which everyone overheard more easily than any other was, "I want my compensation." This was said, repeated and emphasized by him in all sincerity and, the writer has no doubt, with the best of motives behind it. It undoubtedly sounded very harsh, but Dr. Ambedkar would be the last man to wish to deny that he was harsh at times during those memorable days. But his inexorable demand was considered perfectly just by Gandhiji. At length he replied, "You have my fullest sympathy. I am with you in most of the things you say. But you say you are interested in my life."

Dr. Ambedkar: "Yes, Mahatmaji, I am, and if you devoted yourself entirely to the welfare of the Depressed Classes you would become our hero."

Gandhiji: "Well, then, if you are interested in my life, you know what you have got to do to save that life. Your position, from what you tell me, is this. You want adequate price and compensation before you can agree to forego what you have already secured under the Premier's decision. You say that the double system of voting proposed by you gives sufficient scope to the other party to rise, while the seats to be filled under the panel system are designed to satisfy the aspirations of your group. What worries me, however, is this. Why do you propose the panel system only for some seats? Why

do you not propose it for all the seats? /If panel system is good for one section, it should be good even for the whole of the Depressed Class. That is how I regard the question. You are 'untouchable' by birth, but I am now going to make, what might appear as an astounding claim for a man in my position, I am an 'untouchable' by adoption, and as such more of an 'untouchable' in mind than you. Any scheme that is really good should subserve the interests not of this group or of that, but of the Depressed Class as a whole. That is the criterion by which I judge this scheme. My first suggestion to you, therefore, is that if panel system is good for any section of the Depressed Classes it should be extended to all the Depressed Class seats. I cannot stand the idea that your community should either in theory or in practice be separated from me. We must be one and indivisible. /As I have told other friends, I feel no difficulty in accepting your scheme of electing a panel of candidates. But I do not want to let you have the panel for only a few seats. I want to make a present of it to you for all the seats. I confess I do not like the scheme as it stands. It will again divide your community, and I would give my life to prevent that, just as I am giving my life to prevent the disruption of the whole Hindu community."

There is no gainsaying the fact that this declaration by Gandhiji proved the final turning point in Dr. Ambedkar's attitude in the whole of the crisis. Both he and Dr. Solanki found themselves in the grip of love from which there was no escape for them. For the moment, Gandhiji appeared before them as a stronger and better trustee of the interests of the Depressed Classes than anyone else. Now resistance was impossible; indeed from their point of view, futile. They had now the assurance, which to them was so far lacking, that the interests of their community were safe in Gandhiji's hands. It was not easy for them to find words in which to reply to Gandhiji.

Dr. Ambedkar took no time in replying. "I have made my concession, Mahatmaj, by accepting joint electorates. Your offer to accept primary elections for all the seats is very kind."

Gandhiji: "Yes, that is my offer. But now don't let the panel consist of two. It does not give me sufficient space to turn in. You must make it five. And then there are so many other points which you must settle with these friends."

When the company parted it was already dark.

IN THE COURSE OF the day, Pandit Malaviya, sensing the tremendous difficulties of the situation, had issued an appeal to

the country calling upon public bodies, associations and individuals of all persuasions, castes and creeds to communicate their feel-

ings to the Prime Minister by cable. This appeal caused a stir all over India and was construed to indicate a breakdown of negotiations with Dr. Ambedkar. Bombay prepared itself for the worst. The Conference met at 7 p. m. under the presidentship of Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas. Action had become imperative. In an atmosphere tense with excitement, Sir Chunilal Mehta proposed that a cable be sent to the Prime Minister on behalf of the Conference asking him to suspend the Communal decision in so far as it related to the Depressed Classes and to take a referendum of the Depressed Classes themselves on the question of the electorates. Failing a complete agreement, this was one of the possible alternatives that were considered likely to be adopted by the Government in order to allay public feelings. Gandhiji had himself often declared that he would always be agreeable to having the matter settled by a referendum. Sir Chunilal's suggestion, however, met with opposition from Sir Chimanlal Setalvad who argued that the Communal decision not having as yet come into force there could be no question of suspending it. He was opposed to any cable being sent as proposed, also on the ground that whilst negotiations were proceeding in Poona such a cable would easily be misunderstood and



might do harm. The two knights then engaged in a friendly tussle in which both found strong and influential support, Sir Chunilal was vehement. The third day of the fast had gone by. Reports of Gandhiji's condition were causing anxiety. And the chances of an agreement with Dr. Ambedkar seemed at best to be meagre. He felt sure that the country could not afford to lose any more time and that the Prime Minister should know authoritatively through the Conference that it was open to him, if he wished, to save the situation by declaring a referendum and withdrawing his own decision. After a heated discussion it was unanimously decided that Sir Chunilal should proceed to Poona from where a suitable cable could be despatched next morning in case the situation warranted it.

## IX

### VICTORY

**B**UT ON FRIDAY morning the situation had become distinctly hopeful. The miniature Conference, with the addition of Sir Chunilal now, commenced serious work at the residence of Pandit Malaviyaji. Dr. Ambedkar was joined by colleagues from South India and Bengal. They sat round a marble table along with Mr. Jayakar, whose skill was of the utmost value in the details of the negotiations. The points to be discussed and determined were : (1) number of seats and the basis on which it was to be fixed ; (2) number of candidates to be elected to the panel ; (3) representation in the Central Legislature ; (4) duration of the system of primary election ; (5) duration of reserved seats ; (6) distribution of posts etc. Discussion proceeded in a very businesslike manner. Dr. Ambedkar and his group acted in concert and showed the greatest discipline. They proved themselves to be hard bargainers. It was the Doctor himself who did most of the speaking on behalf of the group. On the other side Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sjt. Ghanshyamdas Birla, Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari, and Sjt. M. R. Jayakar took a leading part, although the number of persons actually participating in the negotiations was

well over twentyfive. Gandhiji's suggestion that the panel system should be extended to all the seats was unanimously accepted. The next question, therefore, to be determined was the total number of seats that the Depressed Classes should have. Here was a profitable field for bargaining. The Prime Minister's decision gave 71 seats. Dr. Ambedkar put in a demand in the scheme published by him for 197 seats. Dr. Ambedkar's figure was considered too high. It was contended that the number of seats to be fixed should be based upon the proportion of the Depressed Class population to the total Hindu population. But even on that basis the figure 197 was challenged. This was obviously a matter to be thrashed out by experts who had made a proper study of statistics. Sjt. A. V. Thakkar and Sjt. Bakhle of Servants of India Society came to the rescue. It was decided that the figures should be worked out by these two gentlemen together with Dr. Ambedkar. At the end of two hours the total had been brought down to a little over 160. But they had by no means completed their labours.

The next point tackled was the number of candidates to constitute the panel. The figure originally suggested by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru in Bombay was three. Drs. Ambedkar and Solanki had reduced it to two in their published draft scheme. The general opinion was in favour of five, with which Sir Tej concurred. Gandhiji on the previous evening had asked for five. After a good deal of discussion Dr. Ambedkar agreed to three. But eventually the difference was split and four finally settled.

Representation in the Central Legislature was next taken up. Although the Prime Minister's decision, which the present negotiations sought to alter, did not cover the question of representation in the Central Legislature, it was agreed after some discussion that from all points of view the best course would be not to leave anything concerning the representation of the Depressed Classes to the future. Dr. Ambedkar was himself keen

on deciding the matter once for all. It was agreed that in the Central Legislature 18 per cent of the seats allotted to the general electorate for British India be reserved for the Depressed Classes.

ALTHOUGH PROGRESS was thus made in several directions, an element of uncertainty, nevertheless, pervaded the atmosphere.

Referendum It was already 4 p. m. in the afternoon and very little substantial ground had been covered. The redoubtable Doctor, strongly supported by his colleagues, fought every inch of ground. The persuasive ability of the leaders assembled in Poona was taxed to the utmost, and no one at that stage could foresee the ultimate outcome. A great stumbling block still lay ahead. It was the question of fixing the time limit at the end of which the special provisions *vis.* primary elections and reservation of seats were to expire. Dr. Ambedkar's scheme provided that the system of primary elections should terminate automatically at the end of a period of ten years, but the question of reserved seats was to be decided by a referendum of the Depressed Classes at the end of a further period of fifteen years. Very strong opinions were held on both sides on the question of a referendum. As soon as discussion opened on this subject it became very obvious that while it might be possible to reduce the period of twentyfive years to about fifteen, it was next to impossible to expect Dr. Ambedkar and his group to abandon the demand for a referendum. It was pointed out that there was a great danger that the evil of reserved seats would be perpetuated by making its removal dependent upon a referendum. No one looked upon reservation of seats as desirable. It would certainly prevent the growth of a spirit of nationalism and self-confidence. If perpetuated it would become an unmitigated evil, particularly when the number of seats was far in excess of the needs of the case. Besides, the practical difficulties of taking a referendum were great. The Prime Minister's decision too provided that separate electorates

and reservation of seats would lapse automatically at the end of 20 years. The insistent demand now made for a referendum at the end of 25 years or less was indefensible. It certainly marred the harmony of the proceedings. It is not contended that the demand was entirely devoid of justification. No demand made by any member of the Depressed Classes for reparation could be held to be unjustifiable. Dr. Ambedkar made a frank defence of his position. He refused to entertain the belief that untouchability would be no more in the next 20 years or so. He said, faced with the certainty of a referendum of the Depressed Classes, the Caste Hindus would be compelled to change their behaviour. One of his group said that the proposed referendum was intended to act like the 'sword of Damocles' on the heads of the Caste Hindus. But it was pointed out to them that untouchability being rooted in religious superstition, it was not likely to be removed merely by the guarantee of a certain number of seats in the Legislatures to the members of the Depressed Classes. The stalemate was complete. The atmosphere was full of despair and resentment.

NEWS CAME IN at this stage that Gandhiji's condition had taken a definite turn for the worse. He was losing strength and the doctors were alarmed. It was already nightfall. But the Conference refused to yield to despair. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru expressed himself strongly against a referendum on absolutely independent grounds. Sjt. Devadas Gandhi, who had paid a hurried visit to the jail and exchanged a few words with his father, made a strong personal appeal to Dr. Ambedkar not to hold up an agreement by pressing for a referendum. He said that a future referendum may or may not help to quicken Hindu conscience, but if untouchability was to disappear it would do so now by the action of the Caste Hindus themselves. "That action was sure to follow in the wake of Gandhiji's fast whether he survived it or not. Besides 'the sword of Damocles' which had been insisted upon

"Gandhiji Would Agree"

had been provided in a much more effective manner by Gandhiji's warning to the Caste Hindus that he would be compelled to adopt the same measure of Satyagrah against them as he was now adopting against the Government if they did not bestir themselves to blot out the reproach of untouchability from Hinduism.

Dr. Ambedkar and his friends made a strong protest in reply to these appeals. They revealed for the first time the real reason for the pertinacity of their attitude on the question of a referendum. They charged some of the leaders assembled with attempting to deprive them of something which they believed Gandhiji himself would readily grant. They felt sure that Gandhiji would not grudge the privilege of a referendum to them. This changed the position. Gandhiji had often spoken of a referendum of the Depressed Classes in private and in public. The shrewd Doctor had not forgotten this. Knowing him as he did, he saw that Gandhiji would not resist the challenge now. He was right. It now remained for him to go and see Gandhiji personally about the matter. But he said that if Gandhiji's condition was serious it was no use his going to discuss the point with him. But in spite of the risk involved it was felt that in view of Dr. Ambedkar's feelings in the matter he should see Gandhiji. He and two of his colleagues were almost hustled into a car, and a party of nearly a dozen people repaired to Yeravda jail.

GANDHIJI'S PATIENCE had been taxed to the utmost. The leaders were to see him at 4 p. m. The time was later changed

The Answer from Jail	to 6 p. m. It was now nearly 9 p. m. The leaders were approaching him not yet with an agreed settlement but in order to place their
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difficulties before him. He knew of the matter that was agitating the minds of everyone participating in the negotiations. He was worried and impatient. Major Bhandari, the Superintendent of the jail, and Major Mehta, Medical Officer in charge,

were both attending on him and looked anxious. But they, too, understood that Dr. Ambedkar must be allowed to talk to him. "Mahatmaji, you must come to our rescue," began Dr. Ambedkar. "Some of these friends are opposing our demand for a referendum at the end of a stated period. We are insisting on having it, because we feel that it will do more to remove untouchability than anything else. We expect you to support our claim." This was, of course, the substance of what the Doctor said. His advocacy was able and powerful, and it would have been impossible for anyone else to improve upon it under those conditions. Gandhiji listened patiently and sympathetically. His answer, too, was entirely satisfactory to Dr. Ambedkar in so far as the principle of a referendum was concerned. Gandhiji said he was not only not against a referendum but would welcome it. He liked the idea of putting the mettle of Caste Hindus on trial. But he asked Dr. Ambedkar why the referendum should not be taken immediately or in the near future. He suggested that if a period of one year was not considered suitable, then they might make it five years. If the verdict of the referendum at the end of one year or five years was in favour of retaining the reserved seats they would get a further lease of life, and there should be another referendum at the end of ten years. The process could be repeated every ten years. But Gandhiji did not anticipate the need for repeated referenda. Almost before Gandhiji had finished the doctors stepped in and would not allow any further conversation. They felt that it would be running too great a risk to put a further strain on Gandhiji at that late hour. The indecisive nature of the talk with Gandhiji, which had of necessity to be cut short, was apparent from the following statement made by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru to pressmen as soon as he emerged from the jail: "As we could not agree on one point we wanted to consult Mahatma Gandhi. We placed the point of dispute before him, and he gave his opinion on the matter. We are going back to

resume our discussions and hope to see Gandhiji tomorrow morning."

THE NEGOTIATIONS were restarted early on Saturday morning. Various points of comparatively minor importance were discussed and finally settled. The question of Quantum of Representation the number of seats was again taken up, and the figure of 147 was ultimately agreed to amidst scenes of enthusiasm which bore a marked contrast to the atmosphere of depression that prevailed on the previous day. The Depressed Class leaders were no doubt happy to have secured more than double the number of seats granted in the Prime Minister's decision. On the other hand the satisfactory solution of this particular point was rightly looked upon by all as a great triumph. Caste Hindus were glad in their heart of hearts to give the Depressed Classes seats a little in excess of the proportion of their population. To give more than 147 would have been clearly unfair to the numerous other communities who, while not being treated as untouchables, are nevertheless quite as poor, uneducated and backward as the Depressed Classes. Indeed, from the point of view of the millions who may be termed 'the border line classes' the granting of 147 seats to the Depressed Classes was considered by many to be overgenerous. In this connection the reader's attention is drawn to the article by Sjt. Amritlal Thakkar appearing in this book.

But the spectre of the question which baffled solution on the previous day still loomed large on the horizon. When the matter was taken up for further discussion Dr. Ambedkar claimed that the previous night's interview with Gandhiji had favoured Depressed Classes' claim. He wanted the Conference now to agree to their demand. It was obvious that the spirit of Gandhiji's remarks had been missed. Nobody was prepared to agree to the original demand. Discussion came to a standstill. Dr. Ambedkar decided to see Gandhiji again. It was midday.



when he, accompanied by Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari and Dr. Solanki, went to the jail.

THE DOCTOR desired Gandhiji to agree to a referendum at the end of ten years. Gandhiji was slightly better and nausea

The Rock Melts had partly subsided. He spoke slowly but deliberately. "Your logic is irrefutable," he

began. "But let the referendum be at the end of five years. Surely, five years is a sufficient period to prove the *bona fides*

of the Caste Hindus. But if you insist on postponing the referendum further, I would begin to suspect that what you want is

not to test the *bona fides* of the Caste Hindus but time to organize the Depressed Classes for an adverse referendum."

He made an impassioned appeal for mutual trust, confidence and goodwill and laid bare the anguish that had burnt in his

soul for over half a century. He described how from the age of twelve, his whole being had rebelled against the very idea of

regarding any fellow-human being as untouchable, how since then he had led a ceaseless crusade against the evil, in the course

of which he had severed family ties and himself voluntarily become an outcaste, and how finally when it came to choosing between

his life mission and his wife, he had unhesitatingly decided to choose the former. The Depressed Classes today naturally

felt suspicious of the Caste Hindus. Dr. Ambedkar felt within him the concentrated resentment of an entire race against

centuries of wrong and oppression at the hands of the Caste Hindus. "You have a perfect right to demand cent percent

security by statutory safeguards, but, from my fiery bed I beg of you not to insist upon that right. I am here today to ask for a

reprieve for my Caste Hindu brethren. Thank God, their conscience has been roused. If you proceed to wrest from them

cent percent security by statutory means it will interrupt the process of heart-cleansing and self-purification that is fast

taking place among them. The particular injustice, for the time being, to the 'untouchables' might be checked, but the taint in

Hinduism would remain. After all untouchability is but a symptom of that deep-seated taint. If Hinduism is not completely purged of it, it will assert itself again and again in a variety of ways and continue to poison our entire social and political fabric. I entreat you, therefore, not to deprive Hinduism of a last chance to make a voluntary expiation for its sinful past. Give me the chance of working among the Caste Hindus. That is but fair. But if you ask for ten or fifteen years, then it is no chance at all. The Hindus must give a good account of themselves within five years or not at all. For me, therefore, the five year limit of referendum is an absolute matter of conscience. There should be a referendum, but not at the end of any period longer than five years. Tell your friends that I am adamant on this point. I may be a despicable person, but when Truth speaks through me I am invincible." Then with a tone of finality, not unfamiliar to so many, he said, "There you are. Five years or my life."

Gandhiji had finished. He was utterly exhausted. His voice during the outpouring scarcely rose above a whisper. Everybody present was deeply moved. It was a warm, sultry afternoon, so calm and still that scarcely a leaf moved on the low overhanging branches of the mango tree that seemed as if straining to listen to the fiery flow that proceeded from the lips of the fasting man below. For three days and nights he had thus burnt away sustained only by an imperious, relentless will. One could almost hear, as it were, the body sizzle and crackle in the flame. Dr. Ambedkar tried to say something in support of the ten year period. But when in the same breath he admitted that his was but a feeble argument that hardly even satisfied him, everybody knew that the rock had melted and that the last obstacle in the way of an agreement had been overcome.

Dr. Ambedkar on returning from the jail assembled his group and retired with them to a separate room. They had gone



Thus on the fifth day of the fast complete agreement was reached. Both the wings of the Depressed Classes—one owing allegiance to Dr. Ambedkar and the other to Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah—were willing parties to it. The Caste Hindus were parties to it through the assent and signature of Pandit Malaviya. The other signatures added weight to the document. Gandhiji did not formally sign it himself, though practically all available Congressmen signed it.

On Sunday morning the Deccan Queen carried back most of the leaders to Bombay, where the full Conference met at 2 p. m. and ratified the agreement arrived at in Poona.

The writer of these chapters desires to place on record here his personal admiration for the courageous manner in which Dr. Ambedkar and his friends carried on the negotiations. There could be no quarrel with their claim that the interest of the Depressed Classes should be their only concern. They fought bravely, and at times mercilessly. Judging by results, no harm has been done. And now, in retrospect, the only comment that this writer can make on the Agreement is that it is eminently fair.

## X

### THE FAST BROKEN

**T**HE AGREEMENT was reached, but a serious hitch remained. Soon after the news regarding the Agreement was communicated to Gandhiji, he sent a cable to Mr. Andrews saying that he would break his fast if the Cabinet accepted the settlement *in toto*. Urgent cables had already been sent by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Dr. Ambedkar, Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah, Pandit Malaviya and others, earnestly appealing to the Premier to lose no time in taking the necessary action that would enable Gandhiji to break his fast.

Miss Ellen Wilkinson of the India League visited Gandhiji on Sunday morning, twelve hours after the agreement was signed. Before she left the jail it was approaching noon. There was a general disposition among most people to place the most sinister construction upon the absence of any outward signs of Governmental action. This sympathetic Englishwoman shared the general feeling of pessimism and had some hard things to say about the British ruling class. There was nothing to do but to wait patiently and prayerfully. For, after all, how many hours really had elapsed since the agreement was signed—not more than six.

teen, and yet the atmosphere of pessimism and panic was strong. This was largely due to the unfortunate but persistent propaganda carried on by some Anglo-Indian newspapers against any ready acceptance of the Yeravda Pact by the Government. There was a cable from Reuter's that the Cabinet would meet on Wednesday and nothing decisive could be expected to be done before then. There was another sinister report that before the Cabinet could accept the settlement it would have to satisfy itself that it was acceptable to all the parties concerned and would not adversely affect the position of the other communities. A reference in that connection, it was reported, had been made to various Provincial Governments. This procedure, it was stated, would take at least four days. An inspired propaganda was assiduously set on foot by some Simla correspondents of a certain section of the press that according to the official view there the agreement would not be implemented by the Government since parts of it fell outside the Premier's decision.

**DURING THE FAST**, Gandhiji had not spared himself. He had spent like a prodigal, and his little hoard of energy was almost over. Anxiety rose to a fever pitch when on the morning of the 26th a board of doctors, including Dr. Gilder, and Dr. Deshmukh of Bombay, besides the jail doctors, after examining his condition issued the following report :

**Hopes and Fears** "We carefully examined today Mr. M. K. Gandhi and have come to the following unanimous and considered opinion. His vitality is decidedly lower than it was yesterday and is lowest since he commenced his fast. Today is his day of silence, but we were able to ascertain that he suffered from no particular discomfort.

"The feeling of nausea which troubled him previously and caused vomiting yesterday appears to be less than before. Blood pressure is systolic 185 m.m., diastolic 110 m.m. The disturbing features are that both the acetone and urea content in his urine have increased, the latter to 1.5 per cent.

"We are definitely of opinion that this portends entry into the danger zone."

Explaining what he meant by 'danger zone', Dr. Gilder said:

"Mahatmaji has no reserve fat and he is living on muscle. This is the stage when an attack of paralysis may intervene any time. We are of opinion that he has entered into that stage that is bringing him nearer his end. There is now danger even if the fast is broken."

Everybody was in dismay. Would Gandhiji be sacrificed to the mere red-tapism of Cabinet procedure after all that had been done and achieved? If that happened, it would be the greatest tragedy known to history. Sjt. Rajagopalachari, however, differing from the view very generally held, made a plea for patience in the following statement:

"I do not put any sinister construction on the reported suggestion that the opinion of Caste Hindu leaders and the Provincial Governments on the Agreement may be sought.

"I put the best construction, namely, that the Premier wished to lose no time to take the necessary procedure if Gandhiji insists on total acceptance by the Government before he breaks his fast. I do not think the Premier is not meanwhile taking the minimum steps needed for saving Gandhiji's life."

SJT. C. RAJAGOPALACHARI was right. Mr. Andrews and other friends of India were already busy at the other end. Mr. Andrews cabled on the 25th that everything possible was being done to expedite things there. He saw Mr. Malcolm MacDonald, the Premier's son, at Chequers. The Premier himself was to attend the funeral ceremony of his aunt at Ardingley in Sussex. On receiving the cabled messages about the Yeravda Pact, he hurried down to London, where he was joined by Sir Samuel Hoare. Lord Lothian, too, set about examining the terms of the Agreement. After prolonged deliberations at 10, Downing Street, extending to midnight, they finally agreed upon the

Cabinet Accepts  
Yervda Pact

terms of the statement announcing the substitution of the Government's decision by corresponding provisions of the Yeravda Pact.

The whole of the 26th was passed in anxiety and waiting in Yeravda. The Post, who had made a hurried dash to Poona from Calcutta, visited Gandhiji at noon. The meeting was a most touching one. Without a word, he approached Gandhiji's prostrate form and burying his face in the clothes on Gandhiji's breast, remained in that position for several minutes overcome with feeling. He had heard the news that the Cabinet had accepted the Agreement. "I have come floating on the tide of good news. I am so glad that I have come and that I have come in time," he said to Gandhiji as he recovered his voice. Then they talked intimately of several things. The Post told Gandhiji that so far as the social side of the question of untouchability was concerned he could always be depended upon to do his bit to relieve Gandhiji's burden. He then left his bedside as the strain of conversation was proving too much for Gandhiji.

Simultaneous statements were issued in England and in India on the morning of the 26th, announcing the acceptance by the Cabinet of the Yeravda Agreement. Mr. Haig communicated the fact to the Assembly in a statement which was received with cheers. Its salient features were :

(1) It accepted for recommendation to the Parliament the scheme of representation of the Depressed Classes in the Provincial Legislatures, adopted under the Yeravda Agreement, in place of the scheme of separate electorates in that behalf that had been adumbrated in the Premier's decision.

(2) It accepted the number of seats in the Provincial Legislatures assigned to the Depressed Classes under the Yeravda Agreement.

(3) As regards the clauses in the Yeravda Agreement, referring to guarantees for the welfare of the Depressed Classes, it recognized them as a definite pledge of the intentions of the Caste Hindus to the Depressed Classes.



(4) As regards the method of electing Depressed Class representatives to the Central Legislature and the level of franchise it stated that whilst the Government could not definitely commit itself to the terms of the Agreement as the whole question of representation in the Central Legislature and the franchise was under consideration, the Government was not against it.

(5) It recognized the figure of 18 per cent of the percentage of British general seats at the centre to be reserved for the Depressed Classes as a matter for arrangement between them and the other Hindus.

BUT THE BREAKING of the fast had to be postponed till Gandhiji could fully satisfy himself by studying the actual text of

the Government Communique that it fulfilled  
A Fly in the Ointment the letter and spirit of his vow. At 4-15 p. m.,  
Col. Doyle, the Inspector General of Prisons,

came with the long awaited document which he personally handed over to Gandhiji. With his characteristic sense of delicacy he then left Gandhiji to enable him, as he put it, "to study and discuss the document in quiet". Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari, Sjt. Shankerlal Bankor, Pandit Hridayanath Kunzru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and a number of other friends were present. Gandhiji, after going through the document carefully, handed it over to them with the laconic remark, "I think it should go to the Depressed Class leaders." The position that he took up was that the Depressed Class leaders having accepted the settlement as an integral whole, he was bound to stand by it *in toto*. He did not want an impression to be created that he cared only for that part of it which affected the letter of his vow and was less jealous about implementing the other parts which affected the Depressed Class interests.

It was a question of honour with him. Everybody felt flabbergasted at this unexpected hitch. "It practically means holding another Conference," they protested. "Then a Con-

ference it must be," replied Gandhiji. What was to be done? All the Depressed Class leaders had returned to Bombay. An anxious consultation was held among those present. At last Pandit Hridayanath Kunzru spoke to Gandhiji: "Having studied the document closely, I can assure you that it contains as complete an acceptance of the Yeravda Pact as could be expected from any Government. It fully endorses all those clauses that have a bearing on the Premier's decision, while the other clauses that fall outside that decision are not repudiated but are expressly recognized. In other words, it completely replaces the Premier's decision by corresponding provisions of the Yeravda Pact. Besides, it was clearly understood at the Conference that the Depressed Class leaders themselves did not expect the part relating to the guarantees about their special interests to form a part of the constitution. The form of the Communique must have been determined by the exigencies of constitutional procedure. Sir Tej Bahadur agrees with me that even we, who are co-operating with you in this matter and are anxious to save your life, even we, had we been in Government's position, could not have issued a different Communique." Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari supported Pandit Kunzru's plea.

IN THE FACE OF their unanimous opinion Gandhiji gave in. Calling Col. Doyle to him he said, "I have decided to break

Breaking the Fast	my fast. I had my misgivings, but in the face of the unanimous opinion of these friends, I do not want to take upon me the responsibility of
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prolonging it. But before I break my fast I want to make one thing clear. If after I break my fast all the old restrictions are reimposed on me, it will interrupt the work of reform that has been begun. I would, therefore, expect all facilities necessary for the carrying on of my untouchability work to continue, if I am to remain here." "I am not a plenipotentiary," replied Col. Doyle, "I have no power to commit myself or the Government

to anything, but I shall convey your point of view in the matter to the Government tonight. And I would now like you to break your fast soon." "One thing more," he added as he warmly shook Gandhiji by the hand, "the fruit juice must be handed to you by Mrs. Gandhi." He then left him. An impressive ceremony, the like of which has perhaps never been witnessed in the history of any jail, was held at 5-15 p. m. in the Yeravda Central Prison. The yard was freshly sprinkled over with water. Gandhiji lay on his cot surrounded by the Poet, Shrimati Sarojini Naidu, Shrimati Vasanti Devi, Shrimati Swarup Rani Nehru, Shrimati Urmila Devi, Sjt. Ambalal Sarabhai and his family, Gandhiji's two companions, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Sjt. Mahadev Desai. Before him were assembled a number of inmates of the Sabarmati Ashram and others, in all about 200 persons. The Poet led the prayer by singing a Bengali hymn from Gitanjali. This was followed by the reciting of some Sanskrit verses by Parchure Shastri, a fellow prisoner from the leper yard of the Yeravda Prison. Then was sung, all joining, Gandhiji's favourite hymn, "The Vaishnava Jana". When it was finished, Shrimati Kasturba handed him the orange juice and Gandhiji broke his fast. Simultaneously with it, fruit and sweets were distributed to all present. Huge baskets of fruit sent by known and unknown friends had kept pouring in the whole day, in anticipation of the breaking of the fast. Before Gandhiji had finished sipping his orange juice they all showed their bare bottoms. It was a day of jubilation and union of hearts in common thanksgiving to the Almighty God in that little world in the Yeravda Prison; the milk of human kindness asserted itself and for once the woodenness of jail discipline was forgotten.

AT NIGHT GANDHIJI dictated a statement to the press reminding the people that the breaking of the fast carried with it a

Wedded to  
the Pact

sure promise of its resumption if the reform  
was not relentlessly pursued (and achieved

within a measurable period. "I had thought," the statement ran, "of laying down a period, but I feel that I may not do so, without a definite call from within. The message of freedom shall penetrate every 'untouchable' home and that can only happen if reformers will cover every village." He further expressed the hope that the almost ideal solution that had been reached on the question of the Depressed Class representation would pave the way for the larger unity between the various communities and mark the dawn of a new era of mutual trust, mutual give and take, and recognition of the fundamental unity of all communities. "I am the same to the Musalman today", he declared, "that I was in 1920-22. I should be just as prepared to lay down my life as I was in Delhi to achieve organic unity and permanent peace between them and the Hindus, and I hope and pray that there will be, as a result of this upheaval, a spontaneous move in this direction, and then, surely, the other communities can no longer stand out." Proceeding, he thanked the Government and the jail staff and the medical men who had looked after him during the fast and reiterated his assurance to the Harijans that he was wedded to the pact as a whole. "The terms of the decision sent to me," he concluded, "I have not approached without misgivings. It accepts, I suppose, very naturally only that part of the agreement that refers to the British Cabinet's Communal decision. I expect that it had constitutional difficulty in now announcing its acceptance of the whole agreement, but I would like to assure my Harijan friends, as I would like henceforth to name them, that so far as I am concerned, I am wedded to the whole of that agreement and that they may hold my life as a hostage for its due fulfilment unless we ourselves arrive at any other better settlement of our own free will."

## XI

### THE AFTERMATH

"There is a power that bends our hands  
To mightier issues than we planned."

**B**Y A HAPPY coincidence the 27th of September, the day following the breaking of Gandhiji's fast was his birthday according to the Indian calendar. Although it has become common to observe the 2nd of October which is Gandhiji's birthday according to the Gregorian calendar all over the world, in India, the date according to the Indian calendar is preferred. The whole of the country celebrated an 'Untouchability Abolition Week' from the 27th September to the 2nd October. A programme of intensive work during the week was placed before the country by Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari and Babu Rajendra Prasad. It was a record week both in point of achievement and demonstration of enthusiasm for reform. The Poet himself presided over the public demonstration held in Poona when he delivered one of his most impressive addresses which was at once a challenge, an appeal, and a prophetic vision of the future. In the course of his address, the Poet observed:

"Today, in our determined effort to join Mahatmaji in his noble task of removing the burden of ages, the burden of disrespect upon the bent back of those who have been stigmatized for the accident of their birth, a sin of wilful denial to a large body of our countrymen of sympathy which is the birthright of all human beings—we are not only casting off the chain of India's moral enslavement, but indicating a path for all humanity. We are challenging victimization wherever and in whatever form it may exist to stand the test of relentless questioning of conscience which Mahatmaji has brought to bear upon our day.

"When Mahatmaji began his penance there were cynics in our own country and abroad who mocked and jeered at him, and yet before our very eyes the wonder has happened. Hard rocks of traditions have been blasted.

"Irrational prohibitions cramping our national life are already showing signs of tottering.

"Great has been the achievement due to his penance, but it will be greater glory to him and to us if we can fulfil his vow by fighting to a finish the evils of untouchability, of intolerance, of all that hinders the comradeship of man and man and obstructs our path to freedom and righteousness."

The gloom and the feeling of tenseness, that hung over the Yeravda prison on the whole of the 26th, gave way to an outburst of rejoicing and buoyant cheer on the morning of the 27th. People of all grades and of all shades of opinion representing all classes and sections of society, women with infants in arms and children no less than men, flocked to Gandhiji's bed-side to pay him their respects and get his blessings. This continued from early morning till the prison gate was closed in the evening. But for the jail restrictions the whole of Poona and its surroundings would have flocked there to make a pilgrimage of the mango tree and the solitary sojourner stretched on a cot under its shade, who had just completed a unique penance for India and all humanity. Although Gandhiji was extremely exhausted, he

received all visitors who came to touch his feet, and returned their greetings with a smile, a word of blessing or an intimate remark. The branches of the mango tree were weighed down under the mass of flowers brought by friends and dear ones as birthday greetings, which with their many-coloured blaze, enlivened its dark green foliage.

On the 27th, Gandhiji in reply to a written question from pressmen made a statement which once more demonstrated

A Birthday  
Interview

that so far as he was concerned he was not lacking in the 'Yeravda spirit' or readiness to apply it to the present political situation. "I am by instinct a co-operator," he stated, "my very non-co-operation is intended to purge co-operation of all meanness and falsity, for, I hold, such co-operation is not worth the name. Therefore, as far as I am personally concerned, when the proper time comes, I should throw the whole of my weight in favour of co-operation. No one would be more delighted than I would be to endorse any worthy suggestion for co-operation by the Congress with the Government, and with the Round Table Conference. I would only emphasize and underline the adjective worthy. In spite of my repeated declarations it is not generally recognized that, by instinct, I am a co-operator." This interview was widely published and commented upon. It gave rise to hopes. The 'Yeravda spirit' was in the air. A number of prominent Liberals, including Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Jayakar and Pandit Hridaynath Kunzru, as a result of their talks with Gandhiji, felt that a solution of the political problem was a present possibility if it was approached in the right spirit by Government.

ALL THE HOPES HOWEVER, received a rude set-back when, suddenly on the 29th, as a result of peremptory instructions from "As You Were" Simla, all special facilities in respect of interviews and correspondence that had been extended to Gandhiji were withdrawn. The country was deprived abruptly and at a very early stage of Gandhiji's help in har-

nessing and directing the forces of social reform that he had set to work. Although he was still bed-ridden and the jail doctors considered it inadvisable that he should leave his bed, his nurses were sent away, and Shrimati Sarojini Naidu, whose soothing presence during the fast had been of the utmost value, was sent back to the female prison. His special masseur who came from the city to give him massage was told that his services were no longer required. Visitors were turned back. Mr. Jayakar, who was to see Gandhiji by appointment, was told that he had come too late. By evening, the fact of the re-imposition of restrictions had become known all over. The last person who had to say good-bye to Gandhiji was his own devoted wife and nurse. It is no exaggeration to say that her personal attendance during the critical days was a great sustaining factor. As she was collecting her little belongings to take back to the female jail with her, Gandhiji was heard remarking: "Ba is evidently finding it hard to go." Then came the parting. It was with the greatest difficulty that Mrs. Gandhi succeeded in forcing back her tears. Later on when the fact that she, too, had to go became known, needless to say, some very bitter comments were made in Poona among the delegates of the Conference. But the 'heartless' Government in this case was not so heartless. Next morning, that is, on the 30th, Mrs. Gandhi was released, five days before the expiry of her sentence. She was then told that she could remain in jail with Gandhiji in daylight hours until he was restored to health.

SATYAGRAHA BY fasting is a novel, if a unique weapon, as capable of tremendous possibilities in expert hands as it is of abuse in the hands of the incompetent. There was a great danger of enthusiastic young men blindly copying his method of fasting. Gandhiji was able to intervene just in time to save the life of a valuable worker in the cause of untouchability in the south, who had started an endless fast, without sufficient notice as Gandhiji

Gandhiji's  
Protest



thought. Gandhiji's advice was being similarly sought by workers in the cause of untouchability all over the country, and a number of them, including several trustees of temples and other influential persons closely connected with the work of untouchability reform, had intimated to him their plan to put before him personally their practical difficulties. He drew the attention of the Government to all these facts and addressed a strongly-worded protest against the interruption of his untouchability work. But, obviously, it had no effect on the Government. Considerable regret was felt even in England over the Government's strange and inexplicable action. At the Annual Labour Party Conference at Leicester, in the course of a spirited attack on the Indian policy of the British Government, referring to the re-imposition of restrictions on Gandhiji, Mr. Wedgewood Benn, ex-Secretary of State for India, observed: "The crowning piece of stupidity came last week. Mr. Gandhi had placed himself in a new and higher position in the esteem of his fellow-countrymen. But the prison door was clanged on him again when the Government thought that the risk of the public becoming upset was over. There is only one way to deal with India. We must go back to the methods of peace—back to the will to peace—and if you give what India asks and what she ought to have, you can have peace."

THE APPEAL FOR a living bond with the Harijans and for the establishment of the 'larger unity' that Gandhiji made in his

Larger Unity statement after breaking his fast has not been lost upon the country. The work of reform is proceeding apace. An influential All-India Anti-untouchability League with a network of provincial boards has been set up. An appeal for 25 lakhs of rupees has been made and influential Hindus are busy collecting the amount. It is noteworthy that the Nawab of Bhopal, a Musalman himself and one of the foremost Indian princes, has expressed his

sympathy with the objects of the great reform by announcing a donation of Rs. 5,000 to this fund. The central organization is to be under the able direction of Sjt. Ghanshyamdas Birla, himself one of the foremost Hindu reformers and a close associate of Gandhiji. Sjt. Amritlal Thakkar of the Servants of India Society, than whom no truer servant of the 'untouchables' exists, has been appointed General Secretary of the League. At the time of writing, the response to Gandhiji's appeal for larger unity has overshadowed every other issue. Father Winslow of the Christ Seva Sangha, Poona, has taken the initiative on behalf of the Christians from all parts of India. A manifesto has been issued over the signatures of thirty-seven prominent Christians advocating joint electorates for the Christians on moral and Christian grounds. A similar move has been spontaneously set on foot to find a solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem in the wake of the Yeravda Agreement. Maulana Shaukat Ali, in recognition of the new spirit that is in the air, has sent a cordial telegram to Gandhiji, his 'old chief', invoking his blessings on the efforts which the Maulana, together with Dr. Syed Mahmud and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, is making to achieve unity among the Hindus and Musalmans on the communal question which has so far defied solution for a variety of reasons. He has gone further and asked the Viceroy to release Gandhiji in order to enable him to tackle the problem himself. But the Government's attitude, to say the least, is unhelpful. Maulana Shaukat Ali has so far succeeded neither in impressing upon the Government the urgent need for releasing Gandhiji nor in obtaining a personal interview with Gandhiji. That the times are propitious for an all-round communal settlement, there is no doubt. Pandit Malaviya, in spite of ill-health, has undertaken to do all he can in this matter. He is already busy trying to elicit Hindu and Sikh opinion in the Punjab. The vision of a lasting communal understanding is flickering before the country.

At a time when India is passing through a terrible ordeal of tribulation and sorrow and baleful clouds darken her horizon, Gandhiji's fast stands out as a veritable pillar of light in darkness fortifying men's faith in the ultimate triumph of right against wrong, of truth and Ahimsa against the forces of untruth and violence, however overwhelming for the time they may appear to be.

Gandhiji's fast and its aftermath constitute one of those spiritual upheavals that from time to time shake humanity to its very depths and lift it out of its traditional grooves on to higher planes of development and progress. It has demonstrated several things.

It has demonstrated the superiority of spirit over matter, of the force of love over physical might.

It has renovated the dream of achieving India's national solidarity through a resplendent self-purification which some had begun to doubt.

It has by a momentary lifting of the veil afforded the world a glimpse of the tremendous possibilities of regeneration that are latent in India, of what might have been, what might still be, if the dead-weight that today bears her down is lifted and she is left to evolve her destiny according to her genius.

Lastly, it has held out the promise of regeneration of world peace through the power of Satyagraha, of the matchless alchemy of love and self-sacrifice, once more bringing together the disrupted human family to live under a common paternal roof in perfect amity and love :

“ Like children that have hurt themselves at play,  
And shall have rest, and waken, and—forget.”

## THE PILGRIMAGE OF PAIN

By PADMAJA NAIDU

**I**N A SHELTERED courtyard of the gaunt, grey prison at Yeravda there stands a slender mango tree whose branches in the ages to come will for ever be bright with the flowering tributes of song and legend and romance that will be hung on them by the multitudes that will journey from the remotest ends of the earth to bow before it in worship and recreate in vision the wondrous miracle that was wrought under its drooping boughs. For six long days and nights, in an hourly crescendo of bodily agony and spiritual ecstasy, there dwelt under the shelter of that mango tree, a prophet and saint and martyr, performing the ultimate penance for the sins of a great religion that had fallen perilously far from its high estate. And, even as a world, grown sad and grey with unbelief, watched in awed, incredulous rapture, that great religion passed through a catharsis so immense that within the space of six days and nights it was cleansed of the accumulated corruption of more than six centuries, and there blossomed for myriads of unhappy human beings who had lived for generations trodden into the dust, a renaissance into freedom.

And as slowly, moment by moment, the holy pilgrim, shod with the anguished prayer of an entire nation, walked serene, alone and unafraid, down his predestined path of suffering, there was granted to those who were privileged to watch him a blinding revelation of the immemorial power of the human soul that can triumph over the pain of the human body and transmute Death itself into the glowing substance of life. Watching him one was made more poignantly aware every hour that he was indeed the only free man in a world full of prisoners bound inextricably in the meshes of their own frailty. For he had so transcended all mortal weakness that it could no more matter to him than the falling of a leaf whether the days to come held life or death, because already immortality was his in brotherhood with Christ who died in agony on the Cross and Buddha who offered himself to the hungry tiger. And so one did not dare to mourn for him even when, as the slow sombre procession of days passed by, there dawned that tragic day when, amidst the bitter tempest of prayer that raged silently around him, the beloved of his people lay speechless and still, so still indeed, that there seemed no life left in him save the strange radiance in the grave visioning eyes, that already were looking beyond the outermost edge of Time into Eternity, and the fugitive quivering of the fragile hands that, having shattered the pomp and power of the mightiest empire in the world and remoulded into splendour the destiny of his people, were reaching out in prayer towards things beyond human understanding. Even then one could not mourn or lament. One could only kneel in proud thanksgiving that it had been permitted to faltering mortals to come so close to the heart of the Eternal Truth and the Eternal Beauty that are indivisibly one, made manifest in the invincible spirit of one man. And so also, when, like the eve of afterblue that walks in the footsteps of the shattering storm there came the almost incredible tidings that the rulers of a proud empire had bent in submission to the indomitable will of a little old man, and in the hour of sunset

there rose around him like clouds of incense smoke, soft paeans of prayer and praise for the miracle that had been wrought, it was not for him that one rejoiced. It was only for all those to whom the breaking of the fast of atonement brought a renaissance of faith and hope, for the sorrowful millions to whom he was a candle of vision in the darkness of the world, for the hungry by the wayside whom he had fed and succoured, the maimed and bleeding on whose aching wounds he had poured healing balm, for the valiant armies that he had led to the very frontiers of victory, and, above all, for those whom he has bound to him by ties more exquisite than the tender love that holds children to their mothers' hearts—all those to share the little joys and sorrows of whose common daily lives he had never once failed to come down from the mountains where he dwells so that there had never been any grief so intolerable that it had not grown easier because he shared the burden of it, no joy so small that it had not grown a hundredfold because he partook of it.

## THE CALL OF THE AGE

BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE

**M**AHATMAJI'S BIRTHDAY appears today before us in an awful majesty of Death which has just left him victorious. It is our great good fortune today that Break all chains such a man has indeed come to us, and what is still rarer, that we have not repudiated him, as we have so often done with the messengers of Freedom and Truth. His inspiration is actively at work all through India and even beyond its boundaries. It has awakened our consciousness to a truth which goes far beyond the limits of our self-interest. His life itself is a constant call to us to emancipation in service and self-dedication.

Today is the day of our national acknowledgement of Mahatmaji as the great brother, who, in the present age, is the central bond of our brotherhood in our Motherland. I hope we shall be earnestly solemn in our expression of it and never cheapen the meaning of this occasion by merely indulging in emotional pride. Let us be worthy of the call of this age and accept from Mahatmaji's hand the responsibility which he has accepted for himself.

\* A speech delivered by Poet Rabindranath Tagore at Poona on the occasion of Gandhiji's birthday on 27th September.

WE KNOW that, in the Upanishads, the God who ever dwells in the hearts of all men has been mentioned as Mahatma. The Man of God. The epithet is rightly given to the Man of God whom we are honouring today, for his dwelling 'is not within a narrow enclosure of individual consciousness. His dwelling is in the heart of the untold multitude who are born today in India and who are yet to come, and this greatness of his soul, which has power to comprehend other souls, has made possible what never has yet happened in our history, when even masses have been roused to the great fact that India is not merely a geographical entity but is a living truth in which they live and move and have their being.

Today in our determined effort let us join Mahatmaji in his noble task of removing the burden of ages, the burden of disrespect upon the bent back of those who have been stigmatized for the accident of their birth, and the sin of wilful denial, to a large body of our countrymen, of sympathy which is the birth-right of all human beings. We are not only casting off the chain of India's moral enslavement but indicating the path for all humanity. We are challenging the victimization, wherever and in whatever form it may exist, to stand the test of relentless questioning of the conscience which Mahatmaji has brought to bear upon our day.

WHEN MAHATMAJI began his penance there were cynics in our own country and abroad who mocked and jeered at him, and

Do not Betray yet before our very eyes the wonder has happened. Hard rocks of tradition have been blasted. Irrational prohibitions, cramping our national life, are already showing signs of tottering. Great has been the achievement due to his penance, but it will be a greater glory to him and to us if we can fulfil his vow by fighting to a finish the evils of untouchability, of intolerance, of all that hinders the comradeship of man and man and obstructs our path to freedom and righteousness,



My friends, I appeal to you, do not betray your Great Man and your own humanity by any deviation of your initiative from the pursuit of justice and love towards your fellowmen who have suffered humiliation for ages and remained dumb in a pathetic apathy of resignation, never even blaming Providence and their own cruel destiny. But the angry voice has at last come from the Divine Guide of our history with its warning message that they cut at the root of freedom who, in their unreasoning pride, obstruct the freedom of social communication among their own kindreds.

**PART II**  
**THE PLEDGE**



## "I WILL RESIST IT WITH MY LIFE"

**I** CAN understand the claims advanced by other minorities, but the claim advanced on behalf of the 'untouchables' is to me the unkindest cut of all. It means perpetual bar sinister.

I would not sell the vital interests of the 'untouchables' even for the sake of winning the freedom of India. I claim myself, in my own person, to represent the vast mass of the 'untouchables'. Here I speak not merely on behalf of the Congress, but I speak on my own behalf, and I claim that I would get, if there was a referendum of the 'untouchables', their vote, and that I would top the poll. And I would work from one end of India to the other to tell the 'untouchables' that separate electorates and separate reservation is not the way to remove this bar sinister.

Let this Committee and let the whole world know that today there is a body of Hindu reformers who feel that this is a shame, not of the 'untouchables', but of orthodox Hinduism, and they are, therefore,

\* Extract from Gandhiji's speech at the last meeting of the Minorities Committee, on 13th November 1931.

*pledged to remove this blot of untouchability. We do not want on our register and on our census 'untouchables' classified as a separate class. Sikhs may remain as such in perpetuity, so may Moslems, so may Europeans. Would 'untouchables' remain untouchables in perpetuity? I would far rather that Hinduism died than that untouchability lived.*

*Therefore, with all my regard for Dr. Ambedkar and for his desire to see the 'untouchables' uplifted, with all my regard for his ability, I must say that here is a great error under which he has laboured and, perhaps, the bitter experiences he has undergone have for the moment warped his judgment. It hurts me to have to say this, but I would be untrue to the cause of 'untouchables', which is as dear to me as life itself, if I did not say it. I will not bargain away their rights for the kingdom of the whole world. I am speaking with a due sense of responsibility when I say it is not a proper claim which is registered by Dr. Ambedkar, when he seeks to speak for the whole of the 'untouchables' in India. It will create a division in Hinduism which I cannot possibly look forward to with any satisfaction whatsoever.*

*I do not mind the 'untouchables' being converted to Islam or Christianity. I should tolerate that, but I cannot possibly tolerate what is in store for Hinduism if there are these two divisions set up in every village. Those who speak of political rights of 'untouchables' do not know India and do not know how Indian society is today constructed. Therefore, I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command that if I was the only person to resist this thing I will resist it with my life.*

## GANDHI-HOARE-MACDONALD CORRESPONDENCE

### GANDHIJI'S LETTER TO SIR S. HOARE

Yeravda Central Prison,

*March 11, 1932*

DEAR SIR SAMUEL,

You will perhaps recollect that at the end of my speech at the Round Table Conference when the minorities' claim was presented, I had said that I should resist with my life the grant of separate electorate to the Depressed Classes. This was not said in the heat of the moment nor by way of rhetoric. It was meant to be a serious statement. In pursuance of that statement I had hoped on my return to India to mobilize public opinion against separate electorate, at any rate for the Depressed Classes. But it was not to be.

From the newspapers I am permitted to read I observe that any moment His Majesty's Government may declare their decision. At first I had thought, if the decision was found to create separate electorates for the Depressed Classes, I should take such steps as I might then consider necessary to give effect to my vow. But I feel it would be unfair to the British Government for me to act without giving previous notice.

Naturally, they could not attach the significance I give to my statement.

### SEPARATE ELECTORATES HARMFUL

I need hardly reiterate all the objections I have to the creation of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. I feel as if I was one of them. Their case stands on a wholly different footing from that of others. I am not against their representation in the legislatures. I should favour every one of their adults, male and female, being registered as voters irrespective of education or property qualification, even though the franchise test may be stricter for others. But I hold that separate electorate is harmful for them and for Hinduism, whatever it may be from the purely political standpoint. To appreciate the harm that separate electorates would do them one has to know how they are distributed amongst the so-called Caste Hindus and how dependent they are on the latter. So far as Hinduism is concerned, separate electorate would simply vivisect and disrupt it.

For me the question of these classes is predominantly moral and religious. The political aspect, important though it is, dwindles into insignificance compared to the moral and religious issue.

You will have to appreciate my feelings in this matter by remembering that I have been interested in the condition of these classes from my boyhood and have more than once staked my all for their sake. I say this not to pride myself in any way. For, I feel that no penance that the Hindus may do can in any way compensate for the calculated degradation to which they have consigned the Depressed Classes for centuries.

### “SHALL FAST UNTO DEATH”

But I know that separate electorate is neither a penance nor any remedy for the crushing degradation they have groaned under. I, therefore, respectfully inform His Majesty's Govern-

ment that in the event of their decision creating separate electorate for the Depressed Classes, I must fast unto death.

I am painfully conscious of the fact that such a step, whilst I am a prisoner, must cause grave embarrassment to His Majesty's Government, and that it will be regarded by many as highly improper on the part of one holding my position to introduce into the political field methods which they would describe as hysterical if not much worse. All I can urge in defence is that for me the contemplated step is not a method, it is part of my being. It is the call of conscience which I dare not disobey, even though it may cost whatever reputation for sanity I may possess. So far as I can see now my discharge from imprisonment would not make the duty of fasting any the less imperative. I am hoping, however, all my fears are wholly unjustified and the British Government have no intention whatever of creating separate electorate for the Depressed Classes.

#### GOVERNMENTAL TERRORISM

It is, perhaps, as well for me to refer to another matter that is agitating me and may also enforce a similar fast. It is the way that repression is going. I have no notion when I may receive a shock that would compel the sacrifice. Repression appears to me to be crossing what might be called legitimate bounds. A governmental terrorism is spreading through the land. Both English and Indian officials are being brutalized. The latter, high and low, are becoming demoralized by reason of Government regarding as meritorious disloyalty to the people and inhuman conduct towards their own kith and kin. The latter are becoming cowed down. Free speech has been stifled. Goondaism is being practised in the name of law and order. Women, who have come out for public service, stand in fear of their honour being insulted.

And all this, as it seems to me, is being done in order to crush the spirit of freedom which the Congress represents



Repression is not confined to punishing civil breaches of common law. It goads people to break newly made orders of auto-cruacy designed for the most part to humiliate them.

In all these doings, as I read them, I see no spirit of democracy. Indeed, my recent visit to England has confirmed my opinion that your democracy is a superficial, circumscribed thing. In the weightiest matters decisions are taken by individuals or groups without any reference to Parliament, and these have been ratified by members having but a vague notion of what they were doing. Such was the case with Egypt, the War of 1914, and such is the case with India. My whole being rebels against the idea that in a system called democratic one man should have unfettered power of affecting the destiny of an ancient people numbering over three hundred millions and that his decisions can be enforced by mobilizing the most terrible forces of destruction. To me this is a negation of democracy.

#### AN ARTICLE OF FAITH

And this repression cannot be prolonged without further embittering the already bitter relations between the two peoples. In so far as I am responsible and can help it how am I to arrest the process? Not by stopping Civil Disobedience. For me it is an article of faith. I regard myself by nature a democrat. The democracy of my conception is wholly inconsistent with the use of physical force for enforcing its will. Civil resistance, therefore, has been conceived to be a proper substitute for physical force to be used wherever generally the latter is held to be necessary or justifiable. It is a process of self-suffering, and part of the plan is that in given circumstances a civil resister must sacrifice himself even by fasting to a finish. That moment has not yet arrived for me. I have no undeniable call from within for such a step. But events happening outside are alarming enough to agitate my fundamental being. Therefore, in writing to you about the possibility of a fast regarding the Depressed

Classes, I felt I would be untrue to you if I did not tell you also that there was another possibility, not remote, of such a fast.

Needless to say, from my side absolute secrecy has been maintained about all the correspondence I have carried on with you. Of course, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Mahadev Desai, who has just been sent to join us, know all about it. But you will no doubt make whatever use you wish of this letter.

Yours sincerely,  
(Sd.) M. K. GANDHI

#### SIR S. HOARE'S REPLY

India Office, Whitehall,  
*April 13, 1932*

DEAR MR. GANDHI,

I write this in answer to your letter of 11th March, and I say at once I realize fully the strength of your feeling upon the question of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. I can only say that we intend to give any decision that may be necessary solely and only upon the merits of the case. As you are aware, Lord Lothian's Committee has not yet completed its tour and it must be some weeks before we can receive any conclusions at which it may have arrived. When we receive that report we shall have to give most careful consideration to its recommendations, and we shall not give a decision until we have taken into account, in addition to the view expressed by the Committee, the views that you and those who think with you have so forcibly expressed. I feel sure if you were in our position you would be taking exactly the same action we intend to take. You would await the Committee's report, you would then give it

your fullest consideration, and before arriving at a final decision you would take into account the views that have been expressed on both sides of the controversy. More than this I cannot say. Indeed I do not imagine you would expect me to say more.

#### TERRORISM NECESSARY

As to the Ordinances, I can only repeat what I have already said both publicly and privately. I am convinced that it was essential to impose them in the face of the deliberate attack upon the very foundations of ordered Government. I am also convinced that both the Government of India and the Local Governments are not abusing their extensive powers and are doing everything possible to prevent excessive or vindictive action. We shall not keep the emergency measures in force any longer than we are obliged to for the purpose of maintaining the essentials of law and order and protecting our officials and other classes of the community against terrorist outrages.

Yours truly,  
(Sd.) SAMUEL HOARE

#### GANDHIJI'S LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER

Yeravda Central Prison,  
*August 18, 1932*

DEAR FRIEND,

There can be no doubt that Sir Samuel Hoare has showed you and the Cabinet my letter to him of 11th March on the question of the representation of the Depressed Classes. That letter should be treated as part of this letter and be read together with this.

## DECISION TO FAST

I have read the British Government's decision on the representation of minorities and have slept over it. In pursuance of my letter to Sir Samuel Hoare and my declaration at the meeting of the Minorities Committee of the Round Table Conference on 13th November, 1931, at St. James' Palace, I have to resist your decision with my life. The only way I can do so is by declaring a perpetual fast unto death from food of any kind save water with or without salt and soda. This fast will cease if during its progress the British Government, of its own motion or under pressure of public opinion, revise their decision and withdraw their scheme of communal electorates for the Depressed Classes, whose representatives should be elected by the general electorate under the common franchise no matter how wide it is.

The proposed fast will come into operation in the ordinary course from the noon of 20th September next, unless the said decision is meanwhile revised in the manner suggested above.

I am asking the authorities here to cable the text of this letter to you so as to give you ample notice. But in any case, I am leaving sufficient time for this letter to reach you in time by the slowest route.

I also ask that this letter and my letter to Sir Samuel Hoare already referred to be published at the earliest possible moment. On my part, I have scrupulously observed the rule of the jail and have communicated my desire or the contents of the two letters to no one, save my two companions, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Mr. Mahadev Desai. But I want, if you make it possible, public opinion to be affected by my letters. Hence my request for their early publication.

## "NOT TO COMPASS RELEASE"

I regret the decision I have taken. But as a man of religion that I hold myself to be, I have no other course left open to-

me. As I have said in my letter to Sir Samuel Hoare, even if His Majesty's Government decided to release me in order to save themselves embarrassment, my fast will have to continue. For, I cannot now hope to resist the decision by any other means. And I have no desire whatsoever to compass my release by any means other than honourable.

It may be that my judgment is warped and that I am wholly in error in regarding separate electorates for the Depressed Classes as harmful to them or to Hinduism. If so, I am not likely to be in the right with reference to other parts of my philosophy of life. In that case my death by fasting will be at once a penance for my error and a lifting of a weight from off those numberless men and women who have childlike faith in my wisdom. Whereas if my judgment is right, as I have little doubt it is, the contemplated step is but due to the fulfilment of the scheme of life which I have tried for more than a quarter of a century, apparently not without considerable success.

I remain,  
Your faithful friend,  
( Sd. ) M. K. GANDHI

#### PREMIER'S REPLY

10, Downing Street,  
*September 8th, 1932*

DEAR MR. GANDHI,

I have received your letter with much surprise and, let me add, with very sincere regret. Moreover, I cannot help thinking that you have written it under a misunderstanding

as to what the decision of his Majesty's Government as regards the Depressed Classes really implies. We have always understood you were irrevocably opposed to the permanent segregation of the Depressed Classes from the Hindu community. You made your position very clear on the Minorities Committee of the Round Table Conference and you expressed it again in the letter you wrote to Sir Samuel Hoare on 11th March. We also knew your view was shared by the great body of Hindu opinion, and we, therefore, took it into most careful account when we were considering the question of representation of the Depressed Classes.

#### GOVERNMENT DECISION EXPLAINED

Whilst, in view of the numerous appeals we have received from Depressed Class organisations and the generally admitted social disabilities under which they labour and which you have often recognized, we felt it our duty to safeguard what we believed to be the right of the Depressed Classes to a fair proportion of representation in the legislatures, we were equally careful to do nothing that would split off their community from the Hindu world. You yourself stated in your letter of March 11 that you were not against their representation in the legislatures.

Under the Government scheme the Depressed Classes will remain part of the Hindu community and will vote with the Hindu electorate on an equal footing, but for the first twenty years, while still remaining electorally part of the Hindu community, they will receive through a limited number of special constituencies, means of safeguarding their rights and interests that, we are convinced, is necessary under present conditions.

Where these constituencies are created, members of the Depressed Classes will not be deprived of their votes in the general Hindu constituencies, but will have two votes in order that their membership of the Hindu community should remain unimpaired.

We have deliberately decided against the creation of what you describe as a communal electorate for the Depressed Classes and included all Depressed Class voters in the general or Hindu constituencies so that the higher caste candidates should have to solicit their votes or Depressed Class candidates should have to solicit the votes of the higher castes at elections. Thus in every way was the unity of Hindu society preserved.

#### SAFEGUARD TEMPORARY

We felt, however, that during the early period of responsible government when power in the Provinces would pass to whoever possessed a majority in the legislatures, it was essential that the Depressed Classes, whom you have yourself described in your letter to Sir Samuel Hoare as having been consigned by Caste Hindus to calculated degradation for centuries, should return a certain number of members of their own choosing to legislatures of seven of the nine provinces to voice their grievances and their ideals and prevent decisions going against them without the legislature and the Government listening to their case—in a word, to place them in a position to speak for themselves which every fair-minded person must agree to be necessary. We did not consider the method of electing special representatives by reservation of seats in the existing conditions, under any system of franchise which is practicable, members who could genuinely represent them and be responsible for them, because in practically all cases, such members would be elected by a majority consisting of higher caste Hindus.

The special advantage initially given under our scheme to the Depressed Classes by means of a limited number of special constituencies in addition to their normal electoral rights in the general Hindu constituencies is wholly different in conception and effect from the method of representation adopted for a minority such as the Moslems by means of separate communal electorates. For example, a Moslem cannot vote or be a candidate in

a general constituency, whereas any electorally qualified member of the Depressed Classes can vote in and stand for the general constituency.

### RESERVATION MINIMUM

The number of territorial seats allotted to Moslems is naturally conditioned by the fact that it is impossible for them to gain any further territorial seats and in most provinces they enjoy weightage in excess of their population ratio; the number of special seats to be filled from special Depressed Class constituencies will be seen to be small and has been fixed not to provide a quota numerically appropriate for the total representation of the whole of the Depressed Class population, but *solely to secure a minimum number of spokesmen for the Depressed Classes in the legislature who are chosen exclusively by the Depressed Classes.* The proportion of their special seats is everywhere much below the population percentage of the Depressed Classes.

As I understand your attitude, you propose to adopt the extreme course of starving yourself to death not in order to secure that the Depressed Classes should have joint electorates with other Hindus, because that is already provided, nor to maintain the unity of Hindus, which is also provided, but *solely to prevent the Depressed Classes, who admittedly suffer from terrible disabilities today, from being able to secure a limited number of representatives of their own choosing to speak on their behalf in the legislatures which will have a dominating influence over their future.*

In the light of these very fair and cautious proposals, I am quite unable to understand the reason of the decision you have taken and can only think you have made it under a misapprehension of the actual facts.

### GOVERNMENT DECISION STANDS

In response to a very general request from Indians after



they had failed to produce a settlement themselves the Government, much against its will, undertook to give a decision on the minorities question. They have now given it, and they cannot be expected to alter it except on the conditions they have stated. I am afraid, therefore, that my answer to you must be that the Government's decision stands and that only agreement of the communities themselves can substitute other electoral arrangements for those that Government have devised in a sincere endeavour to weigh the conflicting claims on their just merits.

You ask that this correspondence, including your letter to Sir Samuel Hoare of March 11th, should be published. As it would seem to me unfair if your present internment were to deprive you of the opportunity of explaining to the public the reason why you intend to fast, I readily accede to the request if on reconsideration you repeat it. Let me, however, once again urge you to consider the actual details of Government's decision and ask yourself seriously the question whether it really justifies you in taking the action you contemplate.

I am,

Yours very sincerely,

(Sd.) J. RAMSAY MACDONALD

#### FINAL REPLY OF GANDHIJI

Yeravda Central Prison

*September 9th, 1932*

DEAR FRIEND,

I have to thank you for your frank and full letter telegraphed and received this day. I am sorry, however, that you put upon the contemplated step an interpretation that

never crossed my mind. I have claimed to speak on behalf of the very class, to sacrifice whose interests you impute to me a desire to fast myself to death. I had hoped that the extreme step itself would effectively prevent any such selfish interpretation. Without arguing, I affirm that for me this matter is one of pure religion. The mere fact of the Depressed Classes having double votes does not protect them or Hindu society in general from being disrupted. In the establishment of separate electorate at all for the Depressed Classes I sense the injection of poison that is calculated to destroy Hinduism and do no good whatever to the Depressed Classes. You will please permit me to say that no matter how sympathetic you may be, you cannot come to a correct decision on a matter of such vital and religious importance to the parties concerned.

I should not be against even over-representation of the Depressed Classes. What I am against is their statutory separation even in a limited form, from the Hindu fold, so long as they choose to belong to it. Do you realize that if your decision stands and the constitution comes into being, you arrest the marvellous growth of the work of Hindu reformers who have dedicated themselves to the uplift of their suppressed brethren in every walk of life ?

#### DECISION UNCHANGED

I have, therefore, been compelled reluctantly to adhere to the decision conveyed to you.

As your letter may give rise to a misunderstanding, I wish to state that the fact of my having isolated for special treatment the Depressed Classes question from other parts of your decision does not in any way mean that I approve of or am reconciled to other parts of the decision. In my opinion, many other parts are open to very grave objection. Only, I do not consider them to be any warrant for calling from me such self-

immolation as my conscience has prompted me to in the matter of the Depressed Classes.

I remain,  
Your faithful friend,  
(Sd.) M. K. GANDHI

## GANDHIJI'S LETTER TO BOMBAY GOVERNMENT

*[ The following is the statement that Gandhiji sent to the Bombay Government on September 15 regarding his decision to fast in connection with the Depressed Classes problem. The statement was released to the press on September 21. ]*

THE FAST which I am approaching was resolved upon in the name of God, for His work, and as I believe in all humility, at His call. Friends have urged me to postpone the date for the sake of giving the public a chance to organize itself. I am sorry it is not open to me to change even the hour except for the reason stated in my letter to the Prime Minister.

The impending fast is against those who have faith in me, whether Indians or foreigners, and not for those who have it not. Therefore, it is not against the English official world, but it is against those Englishmen and women, who, in spite of the contrary teaching of the official world, believe in me and the justice of the cause I represent. Nor is it against those of my countrymen who have no faith in me, whether they be Hindus or others, but it is against those countless Indians ( no matter to what persuasion they belong ) who believe that I represent a just cause. Above all it is intended to sting Hindu conscience into right religious action.

The contemplated fast is no appeal to mere emotion. By the fast I want to throw the whole of my weight ( such as it is ) in the scales of justice pure and simple. Therefore, there need be no undue haste in the feverish anxiety to save my life. I implicitly believe in the truth of the saying that not a blade of grass moves but by His will. He will save it if He needs it for further service in this body. None can save it against His will. Humanly speaking I believe it will stand the strain for some time.

The separate electorate is merely the last straw. No patched up agreement between Caste Hindu leaders and rival Depressed Class leaders will answer the purpose. The agreement to be valid has to be real. If the Hindu mass mind is not yet prepared to banish untouchability root and branch it must sacrifice me without the slightest hesitation.

THERE SHOULD be no coercion of those who are opposed to joint electorates. I have no difficulty in understanding their bitter opposition. They have every right to distrust me. Do I not belong to that Hindu section, miscalled superior class or Caste Hindus, who have ground down to powder the so-called untouchables? The marvel is that the latter have remained nevertheless in the Hindu fold. But whilst I can justify this opposition, I believe that they are in error. They will, if they can, separate Depressed Classes entirely from Hindu society and form them into a separate class—a standing and living reproach to Hinduism. I should not mind if thereby their interest could be really served. But my intimate acquaintance with every shade of untouchability convinces me that their lives, such as they are, are so intimately mixed with those of the Caste Hindus in whose midst and for whom they live that it is impossible to separate them. They are part of an indivisible family. Their revolt against the Hindus with whom they live and their apostasy from Hinduism I should understand. But this, so far as I can see, they will not

do. There is a subtle something quite indefinable in Hinduism which keeps them in it even in spite of themselves. And this fact makes it imperative for a man like me with a living experience of it to resist the contemplated separation even though the effort should cost life itself.

THE IMPLICATIONS of this resistance are tremendous. No compromise which does not ensure fullest freedom for the Depressed Classes inside the Hindu fold can be an adequate substitute for the contemplated separation. Any betrayal of the trust can merely postpone the day of immolation for me and henceforth those who think with me. The problem before responsible Hindus is to consider, whether in the event of social, civic or political persecution of the Depressed Classes they are prepared to face the Satyagraha in the shape of perpetual fast not of one reformer like me but an increasing army of reformers whom I believe to exist today in India and who will count their lives of no cost to achieve the liberation of these classes, and therethrough of Hinduism from an agelong superstition.

Let fellow-reformers who have worked with me also appreciate the implications of the fast.

It is either a hallucination of mine or an illumination. If it is the former, I must be allowed to do my penance in peace. It will be the lifting of a dead weight on Hinduism. If it is an illumination, may my agony purify Hinduism and even melt the hearts of those who are at present disposed to distrust me.

SINCE THERE appears to be a misunderstanding as to the application of my fast, I may repeat that it is aimed at a statutory separate electorate, in any shape or form, for the Depressed Classes. Immediately that threat is removed once for all, my fast will end. I hold strong views about reservation of seats as also, about the most proper method of dealing with the whole

question. But I consider myself unfit as a prisoner to set forth my proposals. I should, however, abide by an agreement on the basis of joint electorates that may be arrived at between the responsible leaders of Caste Hindus and Depressed Classes and which has been accepted by mass meetings of all Hindus.

ONE THING I must make clear. The satisfactory ending of the Depressed Classes question, if it is to come, should in no way mean that I would be committed to the No Acceptance of 'Award' acceptance of His Majesty's Government's decision on the other parts of the communal question. I am personally opposed to many other parts of it which to my mind make the working of any free and democratic constitution well nigh impossible, nor would a satisfactory solution of this question in any way bind me to accept the constitution that may be framed. These are political questions for the National Congress to consider and determine. They are utterly outside my province in my individual capacity. Nor may I as a prisoner air my individual views on these questions.

My fast has a narrow application. The Depressed Classes question being predominantly a religious matter, I regard as specially my own by reason of life-long concentration on it. It is a sacred personal trust which I may not shirk.

FASTING FOR LIGHT and penance is a hoary institution. I have observed it in Christianity and Islam. Hinduism is replete with instances of fasting for purification and penance. But it is a privilege if it is also a duty. Moreover, to the best of my light, I have reduced it to a science. As an expert, therefore, I would warn friends and sympathizers against copying me blindly or out of false or hysterical sympathy. Let all such qualify themselves by hard work and selfless service of 'untouchables', and they would have independent light if their time for fasting has come.

Last Seal on  
Non-violence

Lastly, in so far as I know myself this fast is being undertaken with the purest of motives and without malice or anger against any single soul. For me it is an expression of and the last seal on non-violence. Those, therefore, who would use violence in this controversy against those whom they may consider to be inimical to me or the cause I represent will simply hasten my end. Perfect courtesy and consideration towards opponents is an absolute essential of success in this case at least if not in all cases.



## A FIGHT FOR HUMANITY

[On September 20, Press representatives were allowed to interview Gandhiji in jail. The following account of the talk appeared in the 'Times of India' of 21st September.]

FOR THE first time in nine months journalists were permitted to see Mahatma Gandhi in Yeravda Jail this evening at 5-30 when they were treated to one of the most easily delivered and seriously thoughtful interviews to which it has ever been my fortune to listen. No journalist could see Mahatma Gandhi today and discuss the position with him five hours after he had commenced 'a fast unto death' without being immensely impressed.

We were ushered into a long narrow room surrounded by shelves in which were piled jail-made *durries*, blankets and other articles, the labour of a thousand convicts and Swadeshi to the last thread. There, sitting in a chair smiling a welcome, was the man upon whom the attention of all India, and of the entire Western world, as well as a very large proportion of the Orient has been focussed for several days.

When asked if he was hopeful about a happy ending to the affair, he said, "I am an irrepressible optimist. Unless God has forsaken me, I hope that it will not be a fast unto death."

Mahatma Gandhi said that he had had many telegrams from people who had decided or wished to enter upon a fast in sympathy with him. "I urge everybody not to fast in sympathy. I have undertaken it at God's call, and therefore, unless there is a similar definite call to these people they have no business to fast. For one day, for the sake of purification or identification with the cause, it is a good thing; but that is all. Such a fast is both a privilege and a duty, and the privilege accrues only to those who have disciplined themselves for it."

THE INTERVIEW then turned to the question of the day, the representation of the Depressed Classes, or as Mahatma Gandhi calls them, the Suppressed Classes. First of all he expressed surprise that the statement given to the Government of Bombay had not been released. That had been given five days ago. Had he to redraft it today it would be rather different in the light of happenings since then, and he said at the end of the interview that his new statement was supplementary to the other, but not dependent on it.

"My cards are on the table," he said, "but, so far as the present instance is concerned, I could say nothing from behind prison bars. Now that the restrictions are removed, I have answered the first call of the press. My fast is only against separate electorates, and not against statutory reservation of seats. To say that I am damaging the cause by uncompromising opposition to statutory reservation of seats is only partly true. Opposed I was, and am even now, but there was never put before me for my acceptance or rejection a scheme for statutory reservation of seats. Therefore, there is no question of my having to decide upon that point. When I developed my own ideas about that point, I certainly expressed disappointment, and in my humble opinion, such statutory reservation, short of doing service, may do harm in the sense that it will stop natural

evolution. Statutory reservation is like a support to a man. Relying on such support to any extent he weakens himself.

" IF PEOPLE won't laugh at me, I would gently put forward a claim which I have always asserted that I am a 'touchable' by birth, but an 'untouchable' by choice : and I have endeavoured to qualify myself to represent, not the upper ten even among the 'untouchables', because be it said to their shame there are castes and classes among them, but my ambition is to represent and identify myself with, as far as possible, the lowest strata of 'untouchables', namely, the 'invisibles' and the 'unapproachables', whom I have always before my mind's eye wherever I go; for they have indeed drunk deep of the poisoned cup. I have met them in Malabar and in Orissa, and am convinced that if they are ever to rise, it will not be by reservation of seats but will be by the strenuous work of Hindu reformers in their midst, and it is because I feel that this separation would have killed all prospect of reform that my whole soul has rebelled against it; and, let me make it plain, that the withdrawal of separate electorates will satisfy the letter of my vow but will never satisfy the spirit behind it, and in my capacity of being a self-chosen 'untouchable', I am not going to rest content with a patched up pact between the 'touchables' and the 'untouchables'.

" WHAT I WANT, what I am living for, and what I should delight in dying for, is the eradication of untouchability root

and branch. I want, therefore, a living pact  
 The Dream of My Life whose life-giving effect should be felt not in the distant tomorrow but today, and, therefore,

that pact should be sealed by an All-India demonstration of 'touchables' and 'untouchables' meeting together, not by way of a theatrical show, but in real brotherly embrace. It is in order to achieve this, the dream of my life for the past fifty years, that I have entered today the fiery gates. The British Govern-

ment's decision was the last straw. It was a decisive symptom, and with the unerring eye of the physician that I claim to be in such matters, I detected the symptom. Therefore, for me the abolition of separate electorates would be but the beginning of the end, and I would warn all those leaders assembled at Bombay and others against coming to any hasty decision.

"MY LIFE I count of no consequence. One hundred lives given for this noble cause would, in my opinion, be poor

A Cry for  
Justice

penance done by Hindus for the atrocious wrongs they have heaped upon helpless men and women of their own faith. I, therefore,

would urge them not to swerve an inch from the path of strictest justice. My fast I want to throw in the scales of justice, and if it wakes up Caste Hindus from their slumber, and if they are roused to a sense of their duty, it will have served its purpose. Whereas, if out of blind affection for me, they would somehow or other come to a rough and ready agreement so as to secure the abrogation and then go off to sleep, they will commit a grievous blunder and will have made my life a misery. For, while the abrogation of separate electorates would result in my breaking the fast, it would be a living death for me if the vital pact for which I am striving is not arrived at. It would simply mean that, as soon as I call off the fast, I would have to give notice of another in order to achieve the spirit of the vow to the fullest extent.

"This may look childish to the onlooker but not so to me. If I had anything more to give, I would throw that in also to remove this curse, but I have nothing more than my life.

"I BELIEVE THAT if untouchability is really rooted out, it will not only purge Hinduism of a terrible blot but its repercus-

A Fight for  
Humanity

sion will be world-wide. My fight against untouchability is a fight against the impure in humanity, and, therefore, when I penned my

letter to Sir Samuel Hoare I did so in the full faith that the very best in human family will come to my assistance, if I have embarked on this thing with a heart, so far as it is possible for a human being to achieve, free of impurity, free of all malice and all anger. You will, therefore, see that my fast is based first of all in the cause of faith in the Hindu community, faith in human nature itself, and faith even in the official world."

CONTINUING THE interview, Mahatma Gandhi said: "In attacking untouchability I have gone to the very root of the mat-

Issue surpass-  
ing Swaraj      ter, and, therefore, it is an issue of transcen-  
dental value, far surpassing Swaraj in terms of  
political constitutions, and I would say that

such a constitution would be a dead weight if it was not backed by a moral basis, in the shape of the present hope engendered in the breasts of the downtrodden millions that that weight is going to be lifted from their shoulders. It is only because the English officials cannot possibly see this living side of the picture that in their ignorance and self-satisfaction they dare to sit as judges upon questions that affect the fundamental being of millions of people, and here I mean both Caste Hindus and 'untouchables', that is, suppressor and suppressed; and it was in order to wake up even officialdom from its gross ignorance, if I may make use of such an expression without being guilty of offence, that I felt impelled by a voice from within to offer resistance with the whole of my being."

He stated that he had made definite suggestions to the deputation from the Emergency Committee whom he received yesterday and he presumed that these would have been communicated to the press today in Bombay.

Referring to a possible photograph Mahatma Gandhi made a jocular remark concerning his funeral rites whereupon I asked him if he had made any preparations for such rites when visited

by his son Devadas yesterday if the very worst happened ; and I received a dramatic reply : " I have asked my son to say in my name at the Bombay Conference that he as his father's son was prepared to forfeit his father's life rather than see any injury being done to the Suppressed Classes in mad haste. "

What did he really think about the possibilities of his fast lasting ? He replied : " I am as anxious as anyone to live. Water has an infinite capacity for prolonging life, and I will take water whenever I feel I require it. You can depend upon me to make a supreme effort to hold myself together so that the Hindu conscience may be quickened as also the British conscience and this agony may end. My cry will rise to the throne of the Almighty God."



**PART III**  
**THE FAST**





## 'A FINAL SACRIFICE'

[ *As soon as the correspondence between Gandhiji and the Government was released on the 13th September, several appeals were addressed to him earnestly requesting him to consider and postpone the fast. Some of Gandhiji's replies are given below.* ]

### I

TO POET RABINDRANATH TAGORE

"Gurudev, Santiniketan.

"I have always experienced God's mercy. Very early this morning I wrote seeking your blessing, if you could approve of my action, and, I behold, I have it in abundance in your message just received. Thank you." *Gandhi*

### II

TO SGT. JAMSHED MEHTA, KARACHI

"Pray do not ask me to alter a decision taken in God's name and at His call. If He wills, He will keep me alive notwithstanding the fast till a settlement is reached." *Gandhi*

## III

To Sjt. C. RAJAGOPALACHAR

"No cause of distress. On the contrary, I expect you to rejoice that a comrade has a Godgiven opportunity for a final act of Satyagraha in the cause of the down-trodden. The date of the fast is not open to reconsideration." *Babu*

To Sjt. G. D. BIRLA

"There is no cause to be upset. There is every cause for rejoicing. A Godgiven opportunity has come to me for offering a final sacrifice for the most down-trodden. I am quite certain that the fast must not be postponed. I am utterly incapable of sending helpful instructions from here or to foresee future action." *Babu*

## V

To A WOMAN WORKER OF BOMBAY

"Dear Sister,

"You and the other sisters may come and meet me—not that it is necessary. To do work for which the penance is being done is better than seeing this dwindling mass of flesh." *Babu*

## VI

To SIR TEJ BAHADUR SAPRU

"You will not ask me or expect me to alter the decision taken in God's name. It was just my helplessness that prompted the decision. If God wills it, my body will hold out against the fast long enough for a settlement which you and other friends outside can alone negotiate." *Gandhi*

## VII

To THE PRESIDENT, SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY

(In reply to an invitation to stay at the Society's Home at Poona during the fast.)

"Of course the Society's Home is my home. I have lived in exile by choice. When God wills it, He will send me back

home. I have not the slightest notion where the fast will be taken. This is a wonderful ordeal. I deserve it all; for I have the Hindu heart. And have we not deserved the most terrible chastisement from God for our treatment of the 'untouchables'? And so He is trying me through and through before admitting me to the 'untouchable' fold. It has been an effort for the past fifty years." *Gandhi*

## NO SYMPATHETIC FASTS

**I** HAVE BEEN receiving numerous letters and telegrams saying that friends are fasting out of sympathy. I cannot too strongly disapprove of this action. Whether they do so out of love for me, or sympathy for the cause, they should desist immediately, because it is a wrong way of showing sympathy. It is the duty of all to set about rendering service to the 'untouchables' and doing everything to remove untouchability.

\* Gandhiji's statement to the press, September 23.

## TO SOUTH INDIA

**I**T HAS BEEN a matter of increasing joy dāy by dāy to find great ancient temples being opened to the so-called untouchables and thus becoming purified. This one fact among many others has been a great sustaining force during these days of agony of body, mind and soul. But the joy about the opening of temples has not been unmixed with sorrow that the South, where my work on a larger scale among 'untouchables' began, though in South Africa, has not been as prompt and generous in throwing open the gates of temples to the outcasts. Speaking as a Hindu, striving to find and to live up to the very essence of it, I say without the slightest hesitation that God will be installed in the idol of the temples only if they are thrown open unreservedly to the outcasts. Today with human outcasts, God Himself is an outcast.

*25th September.*

M. K. GANDHI

## TO AMERICA

*[The following telegram was sent to Gandhiji from Vienna by Mr. William Shirer, an American journalist, who had come into personal contact with Gandhiji whilst he was in India]*

“**A**MERICAN opinion, though respecting your inner conscience and your deep religious feelings, is profoundly befuddled by your fast. Could you send a definite explanation which might make American understanding easier ?

“You said in your last reply to Mr. Macdonald that you were not against even over-representation of the Depressed Classes. How would you achieve this ? Do you believe that Depressed Class leaders' views should be considered in the working of your plan, and how far could you compromise with them ?

“American opinion also cannot understand your wilfully throwing away your undisputed political leadership of Indian nationalism by starving to death, thus leaving nationalism itself to die, when it seemed to achieve the goal of self-government. You often said you would die for India ; and yet are you not dying now for only one class of Indians and not for the entire nation which you claimed to represent ? The struggle for Swaraj, you told me once, is above all religious groups and as the leader of

the Congress you represented the nationalist Hindus, Muslims, Parsees and the Christians. Are you not deliberately discarding that leadership now for a religious principle which now Hindus have no right to judge? As one who tried conscientiously to present your views fairly both in India and England to American public I would appreciate an answer."

#### GANDHIJI'S REPLY

"**T**HANK YOU. I am not surprised at American bewilderment. It has been my misfortune or good fortune to take the world by surprise. New experiments, or old 'Untouchable' experiments in new style, must sometimes By Choice engender misunderstanding. The laws of decorum imposed on me a rigorous restraint in my letters to the Government. The laws of jail administration prohibited correspondence with the outside world. These I observed in letter and spirit.

"The pact now in the process of formation will provide a far better and larger representation than the British decision. Were I not sure of the Depressed Class opinion behind me as distinguished from that of leaders, I could not have taken the fast in the manner I have done. And even among the Depressed Class leaders, so far as I know, a vast majority is behind me. I would compromise with the latter to the furthest extent consistent with the paramount interest of the Depressed Class. You must not be startled by my presumption in claiming to know the Depressed Class interests more than their leaders. Though I am a 'touchable' by birth, for the past fifty years I have become an 'untouchable' by choice.

"Americans should know that my politics are derived from my religion. If God has ordained death by starvation I know that it will set the last seal on my political leadership. Nationalism will be the stronger for the sacrificial death. A vast majo-

city of Indian community has instinctively realized the correctness and implications of this fast.

"I AM CONVINCED that real self-government has been advanced by this penance, and if God gives me strength to see

Swaraj for the Meanest	this fast through without mind or body wavering, advancement will be still greater. Hence, every day well passed in equilibrium brings
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Swaraj nearer as it can by no other step.

"This preparation for death for untouchability is a veritable preparation for death for the whole of India, for removal of untouchability is an integral part of Swaraj. I would reject Swaraj if that excluded the meanest and sinfullest Indian from its health-giving balm. For me religion is one in essence, but it has many branches, and if I, the Hindu branch, fail in my duty to the parent trunk, I am an unworthy follower of that one indivisible, visible religion. According to this reasoning my sacrifice promotes deliverance of humanity from untouchability in every shape and form. Therefore, it serves all religious groups. IF THEN AMERICA, which has sent me through her known and unknown sympathizers so much sympathy in my distress,

All-embracing Religion	now understands the inwardness of this sacrifice, I expect her to mobilize world opinion in favour of the sacrifice. Though apparently conceived to apply to a corner of this world, it is really intended to cover the whole world. Those who have at all followed my humble career even superficially cannot have failed to observe that not a single act of my life has been done to the injury of any individual or nation. My nationalism and my religion are not exclusive but inclusive, and they must be so consistently with the welfare of all life. I claim no infallibility. I am conscious of having made Himalayan blunders, but I am not conscious of having made them intentionally or having ever harboured enmity towards any person or nation, or any life, human or subhuman."
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## A MODERN MIRACLE

**T**HE WONDERFUL manifestation throughout India is a modern miracle. Gurudev has been a tower of strength. Deep love, all friends. At perfect peace. No conditional acceptance of the settlement will warrant my breaking the fast. '

\*Gandhiji's cable to Mr. Andrews, 25th September.

## REAL STRUGGLE BEGINS

**I**F THE PREMIER accepts the settlement *in toto* I would be bound to break the fast. The settlement, as far as the political part of it is concerned, merely removes the tremendous obstacle that the Cabinet's decision put in the way of reform. The real part of the settlement is now to come and whilst, if the Premier accepts *in toto* the settlement cabled to him, my fast must end, the real struggle for me only begins. As a matter of fact if the Cabinet had published the correspondence in time I would have been in honour bound to insist on the due fulfilment of the duty that lies on the so-called Caste Hindus.

I should be guilty of betrayal of trust if I did not ensure that, but as they had no notice worth the name of my intention to fast, I could not expect them all of a sudden to revolutionize Hindu thought. They must, therefore, have breathing time for work, and so I have told fellow-workers that if this fast is broken in virtue of the Cabinet's satisfactory answer it would be put in suspension but sure as fate it will be taken up again if the part to be performed by the Caste Hindus is not well played during the coming months.

The tremendous awakening that has taken place in the country during the five days fills me with hope that orthodoxy will surpass itself and rid Hinduism of the canker of untouchability which is eating into its vitals.

I suppose the future plan is in the hands of Government.

## A TRUE FRIEND OF BRITAIN

[ *Miss Ellen Wilkinson and Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon of the India League Delegation had an interview with Gandhiji at Yeravda Jail. Gandhiji gave the delegation the following message on the 25th for Great Britain which was exclusively published by the 'Daily Herald', London* ]

EVERY DAY of the fast seems to me conclusive evidence of the hand of God in it. Even I with my boundless faith in God and His mercy was not prepared for this great wave of awakening against untouchability. That some of the great temples should have spontaneously admitted the 'untouchables' without restriction is to me a modern miracle. They have only now admitted God. Hitherto, the images, which the custodians, falsely and in their pride, thought had God within were Godless.

The Cabinet decision was to me a timely warning from God that I was asleep when He was knocking at the door and waking me up. The settlement arrived at is to me but the beginning of the work of purification. The agony of the soul is not going to end until every trace of untouchability is gone. I do not want the British Cabinet to come to any hasty decision. I do not want them for saving my life or for appearing to be right

with the world to accept it in a niggardly spirit. If they have not realized the true inwardness of the Agreement, they must summarily reject it, but if they have, they will not alter one word or comma of it, but they will implement every condition that is implied in the great settlement which the so-called untouchables and the so-called touchables have arrived at with all their heart and with God as their witness.

I hope that they and the world will realize that this settlement is, if I may say so in all humility, far superior to the Cabinet decision. There is no pride about it. The Cabinet composed of foreigners, knowing nothing first hand of the Indian condition or what untouchability could mean, were labouring under a heavy handicap, and even though some Indians had referred this matter to them, they should have declined the responsibility to which they were wholly unequal.

I am not saying this from my penitential bed in any carping spirit or spirit of irritation.

I claim to be a true friend of the British nation and also of the Cabinet, and I would be untrue to them, to myself and to my call, if at this moment I suppressed my relevant opinion. I would like finally to assure Britain that so long as life lasts in me, I shall undergo as many fasts as are necessary in order to purify Hinduism of this unbearable taint. Thank God there is not only one man in this movement but, I believe, there are several thousands who will lay down their lives in order to achieve this reform in its fulness.

## AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

*[The policy of English-owned newspapers in India towards Gandhiji has generally been one of unfriendliness, if not positive hostility. But there are exceptions, and the following account of an exclusive interview given by Gandhiji "on the fifth day of his fast to the 'Times of India' will be read with much interest. It appeared in the 'Illustrated Weekly of India' dated October 2, 1932.]*

“YES, I shall certainly fast again, should the necessity arise, as I firmly believe that by this means one can convince the world of the sincerity of one's view.”

So said Mr. Gandhi to me in answer to one of my questions when I had the pleasure of having a long talk with him on the fifth day of his fast in Yeravda Jail. Although the pact has been signed and everything points to an honourable and satisfactory settlement at the time of writing, I feel that a brief account of my visit to Mr. Gandhi is worth recording.

I certainly did not expect when I set off from Poona Station before seven in the morning that I would be able to see Mr. Gandhi so early—if at all, but what a pleasant surprise it was when I received word from the jail authorities that the time was opportune. The great doors of Yeravda swung open,

and I walked in though feeling secretly glad in those great sombre buildings that my stay was only to be a comparatively brief one.

My escort led me through a courtyard, then through another little door which led on to a small compound roughly 150 feet by 40 feet wide, on one side of which were a few cells intended for state prisoners, but they all appeared to be unoccupied. At one end of the compound under the shade of a small mango tree was Mr. Gandhi lying on a cot covered with a prison blanket.

At his head was one of his faithful followers fanning him gently with a towel to keep off pestering flies. Seated round him were Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel, Mrs. Gandhi, Mr. Mahadev Desai. Introductions over, Mr. Gandhi soon fell to asking me what particular question I wanted to ask him. But to see him looking so frail and weak and obviously ill—well it seemed too much to start interviewing.

But his eyes flashed when he answered my question quoted at the top of this article. He then appeared to recede into his shell, only raising himself up on his elbows to take a drink of water from a bottle at his side.

"Very nasty you know at times," he said, "I try to change it by putting in a pinch of salt, but through it all my stomach is in an intense state of nausea."

MR. GANDHI said that he would be delighted to go to London for the third Conference if his demands would be met, but not otherwise.

Then I asked him what I thought was a pertinent question and certainly did not expect an answer, but the ailing man had always a ready reply, and here is what he said :

"You ask, 'Suppose all Indian leaders decided to practise this method of gaining their own ends, no matter for what cause?' Well, I admit, there is a lot of risk in the method. But it is like every great power in the world. Misuse creates

mischievous. Let us take the illustration of a well-known poison—arsenic. It is a most powerful medicinal drug, but should not on that account be blotted out of existence, although we know that many people make harmful use of it. Therefore, if a thing is inherently good, and it is used at the proper time and in the proper measure, it is calculated to do universal good on an extensive scale almost bordering on the miraculous. One must make use of that power irrespective of the fact that others are likely to make harmful use of it.

“FURTHER, IN A case of fasting of this nature, there is not much scope for it to thrive or become popular for the simple reason that it is such an agonizing process that ordinary human nature shudders at the very thought of having to undergo it.

Will Not Become Popular

“So you see, the danger is not so very great. It is only by training the body that one can do without food for any length of time. The undisciplined and weak would soon give up the idea.”

At the end of this long statement Mr. Gandhi leant back weak from exhaustion on to his bed. Immediately two of the jail doctors were at his side to render what help they could. But Mr. Gandhi seemed to derive most comfort from Mrs. Gandhi, who, although obviously suffering, seemed delighted to have the opportunity of altering his pillow, rubbing his forehead with olive oil, and quietly talking to him.

MEANWHILE, Mr. Gandhi's disciples were receiving other political visitors and soon the compound was a scene of bustle and excitement.

The Fasting  
Routine

From his secretary I gathered that Mr. Gandhi rose during his fast every morning at four; prayers were said from then to about half-past four or five; then a shave by his prison barber, his breakfast,—a drink of water, and perhaps, an hour's sleep—but this was constantly interrupt-

ed by special cables from all over the world. I was permitted to read some of them. One from Germany read :

✂ " Friends of Peace wish your life be saved from the battle.  
—Peace Union of Hamburg."

After about an hour, I realized that Mr. Gandhi had far more important business to attend to than giving his views on life and other kindred subjects to a journalist, and I left him explaining to his secretary in a husky voice, obviously weak through loss of nourishment, some important detail, his thin fore-finger waving in the air, in an endeavour to force home his point.

Then once more he would lay back exhausted, but ever ready with that indomitable will of his, those flashing eyes to resent any interference from the path which he had chosen.

And so I left him, one of India's greatest political leaders, no matter how much one disagrees with his politics—Mr. Gandhi, the philosopher, the thinker—the dreamer—well aren't we all?



## FIRE NEVER SHALL BE PUT OUT

**T**HE FAST taken in the name of God was broken in His name in the presence of Gurudev and the leper prisoner Parachure Shastri, a learned Pandit, seated Cause Worth the Agony opposite each other, and a company of loving and loved ones who had gathered round me.

The breaking was preceded by the Poet singing one of his Bengali hymns, then mantras from the Upanishads by Parachure Shastri, and then my favourite hymn 'Vaishnavajana Te'. The hand of God has been visible in the glorious manifestation throughout the length and breadth of India during the past seven days. Cables received from many parts of the world, blessing the fast, have sustained me through the agony of the body, mind and soul that I passed through during the seven days.

But the cause was worth going through that agony, and the sacrificial fire once lit shall not be put out till there is the slightest trace of untouchability still left in Hinduism; and if it is God's will that it does not end with my life, I have the confidence that there are several thousands of earnest reformers who will lay down their lives in order to purify Hinduism of this awful curse.

\*Statement issued by Gandhiji on 26th September after breaking the fast.

THE SETTLEMENT arrived at, so far as I can see, is a generous gesture on all sides. It is a meeting of hearts, and my Hindu gratitude is due to Dr. Ambedkar, A Generous Gesture Rao Bahadur Srinivasan and their party on the one hand and Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah on the other. They could have taken up an uncompromising and defiant attitude by way of punishment to the so-called Caste Hindus for the sins of generations. If they had done so, I at least could not have resented their attitude and my death would have been but a trifling price exacted for the tortures that the outcasts of Hinduism have been going through for unknown generations. But they chose a nobler path and have thus shown that they have followed the precept of forgiveness enjoined by all religions. Let me hope that the Caste Hindus will prove themselves worthy of this forgiveness and carry out to the letter and spirit every clause of the settlement with all its implications.

THE SETTLEMENT is but the beginning of the end. The political part of it, very important though it no doubt is, occupies but a small space in the vast field of reform Warning to Caste Hindus that has to be tackled by Caste Hindus during the coming days, namely the complete removal of social and religious disabilities under which a large part of the Hindu population has been groaning.

I should be guilty of a breach of trust, if I do not warn fellow reformers and Caste Hindus in general that the breaking of the fast carried with it a sure promise of its resumption, if this is not relentlessly pursued and achieved within a measurable period. I had thought of laying down a period, but I feel that I may not do so without a definite call from within. The message of freedom shall penetrate every 'untouchable' home, and that can only happen if reformers will cover every village. And yet in the wave of enthusiasm and in an inordinate desire to spare me the repetition of the agony there should be no coercion.

We must, by patient toil and self-suffering, convert the ignorant and superstitious but never seek to compel them by force.

I WISH TOO that the almost ideal solution that has been arrived at may be followed by the other communities and that we might see a dawn of a new era of mutual trust, mutual give and take, and a recognition of the fundamental unity of all communities.

Dawn of a  
New Era

I would here single out the Hindu-Moslem-Sikh question. I am the same to the Musalman today that I was in 1920-1922. I should be just as prepared to lay down my life as I was in Delhi to achieve an organic unity and permanent peace between them, and I hope and pray that there will be, as a result of this upheaval, a spontaneous move in this direction, and then surely the other communities can no longer stand out.

In conclusion I would like to thank the Government and the jail staff and the medical men appointed by the Government to look after me. Extreme care and attention was bestowed upon me. Nothing was left undone. The jail staff worked under treble pressure and I observed that they did not grudge this labour. I thank them all from high to low.

I THANK THE British Cabinet for hastening the decision on the settlement. The terms of the decision sent to me, I have not approached without misgivings. It accepts, I suppose, very naturally only that part of the Agreement that refers to the British Cabinet's communal decision. I expect that they had constitutional difficulty in now announcing their acceptance of the whole agreement.

Hold My Life  
as Hostage

But I would like to assure my Harijan friends, as I would like henceforth to name them, that so far as I am concerned, I

am wedded to the whole of that agreement and that they may hold my life as hostage for its due fulfilment unless we ourselves arrive at any other and better settlement of our own free will.

## HYMNS OF GANDHIJI'S FAST

उठ जाग मुसाफिर ! मोर भई,  
अब रैन कहां जो सोवत है ?  
जो सोवत है वह खोवत है,  
जो जागत है वह पावत है ।

टुक नींदसे अखियाँ खोल जरा,  
ओ गाफिल ! रबसे ध्यान लगा ।  
यह प्रीतकरनकी रीत नहीं,  
रब जागत है तू सोवत है ।

अय जान भुगत करनी अपनी,  
ओ पापी ! पापमें चैन कहां ? - -  
जब पापकी गठढी सीस धरी,  
फिर सीस पकड़ क्यों रोवत है ?

जो काल करे वह आज कर ले,  
जो आज करे वह अब कर ले,  
जब चिड़ियन खेती चुगत डारी,  
फिर पछतावे क्या होवत है ?

### TRAVELLER ARISE

The dawn is here, O traveller, arise ;  
Past is the night, and yet sleep seals thine eyes.  
Lost is the soul that sleeps—dost not thou know ?  
The sleepless one finds peace beyond all woe.

O waken ! shake thou off thy slumber deep,  
Remember Him who made thee, and O, weep  
For shame, is this the way of love—to sleep  
When He Himself doth ceaseless vigil keep ?

Repent, O Soul, from sin, and find release,  
O erring one, in sin there is no peace.  
What boots it now to mourn on bended knees,  
When thou thyself didst thine own load increase ?

What thou wouldst do tomorrow do today,  
Do now the task that thou must face today,  
What shall avail thy sorrow and dismay,  
When thieving birds have borne thy grain' away ?

\*Shrimati Padmaja Naidu's rendering into verse of the Hindi song  
sung at the commencement of Gandhiji's Fast.

जीवन जखन झुकाये जाय, करुणा-धाराय एशो,  
सकल माधुरी छुकाये जाय, गीत-सुधारसे एशो.

कर्म जखन प्रबल आकार

गरजि उठीया ठाके चारिधार

हृदय-प्रान्ते हे जीवन-नाथ ! शान्त-चरणे एशो.

आपनारे जबे करिया कृपण

कोने पडे थाके दीनहीन मन

दुआर खुलिया हे उदारनाथ ! राज-समारोहे एशो.

वासना जखन विपुल धूलाय

अंध करिया अबोधे भूलाय

ओहे पवित्र ! ओहे अनिद्र ! रुद्र आलोके एशो.

रवीन्द्रनाथ ठाकुर

### WHEN THE HEART IS HARD

When the heart is hard and parched up, come upon me  
with a shower of mercy.

When the grace is lost from life, come with a burst of song.

When tumultuous work raises its din on all sides shutting  
me out from beyond, come to me, my lord of silence, with thy  
peace and rest.

When my beggarly heart sits crouched, shut up in a corner,  
break open the door, my king, and come with the ceremony of a  
king.

When desire blinds the mind with delusion and dust, O  
thou holy one, thou wakeful, come with thy light and thy  
thunder.

Gitanjali : Song 39.

\*The Song with which the Poet led the prayer on the occasion of the  
breaking of Gandhiji's Fast.





**PART IV**  
**A LIVING PACT**



## THE YERAVDA PACT

*[The following is the text of the agreement which has been arrived at between the leaders acting on behalf of the Depressed Classes and of the rest of the Hindu community regarding the representation of the Depressed Classes in the legislatures and certain other matters affecting their welfare. ]*

1. There shall be seats reserved for the Depressed Classes out of general electorates. Seats in Provincial Legislatures shall be as follows :

MADRAS	....	....	....	....	30
BOMBAY WITH SIND			....	....	15
PUNJAB	....	....	....	....	8
BEHAR AND ORISSA			....	....	18
CENTRAL PROVINCES			....	....	20
ASSAM	....	....	....	....	7
BENGAL	....	....	....	....	30
UNITED PROVINCES			....	....	20
Total					148

These figures are based on the total strength of the Provincial Councils announced in the Prime Minister's decision.

2. Election to these seats shall be by joint electorates subject, however, to the following procedure :

All members of the Depressed Classes registered in the general electoral roll of a constituency, will form an electoral college which will elect a panel of four candidates belonging to the Depressed Classes, for each of such reserved seats by the method of single vote and four persons getting the highest number of votes in such primary election shall be the candidates for election by the general electorate.

3. Representation of the Depressed Classes in the Central Legislature shall likewise, be on the principle of joint electorates and reserved seats by the method of primary election in the manner provided for in clause 2 above for their representation in Provincial Legislatures.

4. In the Central Legislature 18 per cent. of the seats allotted to the general electorate for British India in the said legislature shall be reserved for the Depressed Classes.

5. The system of primary election to panel of candidates for election to the Central and Provincial Legislatures, as hereinbefore mentioned, shall come to an end after the first ten years unless terminated

sooner by mutual agreement under the provision of Clause 6 below.

6. The system of representation of the Depressed Classes by reserved seats in the Provincial and Central Legislatures as provided for in clauses 1 and 4 shall continue until determined by mutual agreement between the communities concerned in this settlement.

7. The franchise for the Central and Provincial Legislatures for the Depressed Classes shall be as indicated in the Lothian Committee Report.

8. There shall be no disabilities attaching to anyone on the ground of his being a member of the Depressed Classes in regard to any elections to local bodies or appointment to public service.

Every endeavour shall be made to secure a fair representation of the Depressed Classes in these respects subject to such educational qualifications as may be laid down for appointment to public services.

9. In every province out of the educational grant an adequate sum shall be earmarked for providing educational facilities to members of the Depressed Classes.

MADAN MOHAN MALAVIYA  
TEJ BAHADUR SAPRU  
M. R. JAYAKAR  
B. R. AMBEDKAR  
SRINIVASAN

B. S. KAMAT  
G. K. DRODHAR  
A. V. THAKKAR  
R. K. BAKHLE  
P. G. SOLANKI

M. C. RAJAH  
C. V. MEHTA  
C. RAJAGOPALACHARI  
RAJENDRA PRASAD  
G. D. BIRLA  
RAMESHWAR DAS BIRLA  
SHANKERLAL BANKER

P. BALOO  
GOVIND MALAVIYA  
DEVADAS GANDHI  
BISWAS  
B. N. RAJBHOJ  
GAVAI

The following signatures were added in Bombay at the final sitting of the Hindu Conference on September 25 :

LALLUBHAI SAMALDAS  
HANS MEHTA  
K. NATARAJAN  
KAMAKOTI NATARAJAN  
PURSHOTTAMDAS THAKURDAS  
MATHRADAS VASSANJI  
WALCHAND HIRACHAND  
H. N. KUNZRU  
K. G. LIMAYE

P. KODANDARAO  
G. K. GADGIL  
MANU SUBEDAR  
AVANTIKABAI GOKHLE  
K. J. CHITALIA  
RADHAKANT MALAVIYA  
A. R. BHAT  
COLAM  
PRADHAN

### AGREEMENT IN BRIEF

**P**URSUANT to the wishes of the All India Conference consisting of Caste Hindus and Depressed Classes held in Bombay, we have come to a mutual settlement regarding representation of the Depressed Classes in Legislatures, and are furnishing a full copy to the Bombay Government for transmission to the Government of India and yourself.

We have seen Mahatma Gandhi in jail during the last four days. Today is the fifth day of his fast. His condition is steadily getting worse and vitality ebbing. Doctors advise us that the danger point may be reached in about 48 hours. We are most anxious to prevent the disaster, not merely for his sake but in national interest. And we would urge it on you to withdraw your decision providing separate electorates for the Depressed Classes to enable him to break his fast. Delay would be dangerous to his life and affect public mind greatly.

We briefly summarize the terms of the mutual settlement.

Seats for representatives of the Depressed Classes in Provincial Legislatures have been specifically fixed regarding each province, the total number of seats in all provinces agreed upon being 148 out of general electorates in substitution of 71 given by your decision.

\* Hindu Leaders' cable to the Premier, 3 p.m. September 24.



In the Central Legislature 18 per cent of the seats of general electorates in British India will be reserved for them. Election to all these reserved seats shall be by joint electorates subject to the following procedure:

All members of the Depressed Classes registered in the general electoral roll will form an electoral college which will elect a panel of four candidates for each reserved seat by the method of single vote. The four persons getting the highest number of such votes in the primary election shall be candidates for election by the general electorate.

Reservation of seats shall continue until determined by mutual agreement between the communities concerned in this settlement. The system of the special method of primary election shall automatically cease on the expiry of ten years if not earlier along with the system of reservation.

There shall be no disabilities as regards them regarding election to local bodies or appointment to public services, and endeavour will be made to secure their fair representation consistently with educational qualifications. In every province out of the educational grant an adequate sum shall be earmarked for providing educational facilities for them.

India will now anxiously await your immediate action.

## TO THE PREMIER

### I

*[The following cable was sent by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Sjt. M. R. Jayakar to the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for India, the Lord Chancellor and Lord Irwin on September 24.]*

CASTE HINDUS, led by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, and the Depressed Class representatives including Dr. Ambedkar, Mr. R. Srinivasan, both members of the R.T.C., and Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah, and many others from Madras and other provinces, came to a settlement today regarding the representation of the Depressed Classes and protection of their rights.

Mahatma Gandhi agrees with the terms of the settlement. A full copy of the agreement has been furnished to the Bombay Government and the Government of India and a summary of it has been cabled to you today.

Mahatma Gandhi's vitality is rapidly ebbing and the country is much agitated. There is a strong and genuine movement to remove untouchability all over the country.

We earnestly urge you to accept the settlement and withdraw that part of your decision affecting the Depressed Classes and take immediate action which the whole country expects and

will appreciate. Immediate action is necessary to enable Gandhiji to break his fast.

We feel strongly that it will have a very salutary effect on the situation.

## II

*[Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. R. Srinivasan sent the following cable to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for India and also the Viceroy.]*

WE ARE GLAD to inform you that an agreement has been reached between the Depressed Classes and Caste Hindus in regard to the questions involved in the Communal Award, the substance whereof has been already cabled to you. This settlement has the support of all the Depressed Classes including those from Madras. We request you to give effect to this settlement immediately in order to enable Mahatmaji to break his fast.

## III

*[Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah sent the following cable to the Prime Minister, Secretary of State for India, Lord Sankey and Lord Irwin.]*

ON BEHALF OF myself and my party I accept and support the Agreement concluded today regarding the Depressed Classes representation. I strongly urge for immediate action to enable Mahatma Gandhi to break his fast.

## IV

**I**N VIEW OF the settlement made by the Depressed Classes with Mahatma Gandhi, the Hindu Mahasabha in its annual session assembled in Delhi, urges the modification of the Communal Award accordingly and the immediate announcement of the same so that Mahatma Gandhi may be enabled to break his fast. His condition is already causing anxiety.

*N. C. Kelkar (Delhi)*

## V

## TO THE VICEROY

[*Pandit Malaviya, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr. Ambedkar sent the following telegram to H. E. the Viceroy.*]

**H**INDU LEADERS and Depressed Class Leaders of all shades of opinion, including Dr. Ambedkar, have come to a complete settlement regarding all matters, touching the representation of the Depressed Classes. Gandhiji has expressed assent thereto. The full terms have been furnished to the Bombay Government for transmission to Your Excellency and the Prime Minister. We earnestly urge immediate action to enable Gandhiji to break his fast. His condition is causing much anxiety.

## GOVERNMENT ACCEPTS THE PACT

[*Mr. Haig, Home Member, made the following statement in the Assembly on September 26.*]

HIS MAJESTY'S Government have learnt with great satisfaction that an agreement has been reached between the leaders of the Depressed Classes and of the rest of the Hindu community regarding the representation of the Depressed Classes in the new legislatures and certain other matters affecting their welfare, in place of the system of general constituencies contained in Government's Communal Award of 4th August last.

The agreement provides for general constituencies within which seats are reserved for the Depressed Classes, subject to important conditions as to the manner in which the reserved seats are filled.

The Government in their Award which was given in the absence of an agreement between the communities were solely concerned, in relation to the Depressed Classes, to provide adequate securities that the interests of these classes should be observed by the new legislatures.

As the representatives of the Depressed Classes and other Hindus acting together believe that the scheme now forwarded by them to His Majesty's Government is adequate for that

purpose, the Government in accordance with the procedure which they laid down in paragraph 4 of their Award will recommend to Parliament in due course the adoption of the clauses of the Agreement dealing with representation in the provincial legislatures in place of the provisions in paragraph 9 of the Award.

It will be understood that the total number of general seats, including those for the Depressed Classes under the Agreement, will in each province remain the same as the number of general seats plus the number of special Depressed Class seats provided for in His Majesty's Government's decision.

The Government note that the agreement deals also with certain questions outside the scope of their Award of August 4. Clauses 8 and 9 deal with general points, the realization of which will be likely to depend in the main on the actual working of the constitution, but His Majesty's Government take note of these clauses as a definite pledge of the Caste Hindus towards the Depressed Classes.

There are two other points outside the scope of their Award :

(1) The agreement contemplates that the franchise for the Depressed Classes should be that recommended by the Franchise Committee. It is obvious that the level of the franchise for the Depressed Classes (and indeed for Hindus generally) must be determined at the same time as that for the other communities is being settled, and the whole subject is under consideration by His Majesty's Government.

(2) The agreement also provides for a particular method of electing Depressed Class representatives for the Legislature at the Centre. This again is a subject outside the terms of this Award, which is under investigation as a part of the whole scheme for the election for the Legislature at the Centre, and no piecemeal conclusion can be reached.

What has been said on these two points should not be regarded as implying that His Majesty's Government are against what is proposed in the agreement, but that these questions are still under consideration. To prevent misunderstanding, it may be explained that the Government regard the figure 18 per cent for the percentage of the British Indian general seats at the Centre to be reserved for the Depressed Classes as a matter for settlement between them and other Hindus.

## SATYAGRAHA AND REFORM

*[The following is the substance of a talk that Gandhiji gave to a deputation on behalf of the Depressed Classes consisting of Sjs. S. M. Mate, Rajabhoj and Limaye and others who saw Gandhiji in the Yeravda Jail on the morning of 21st September, the second day of Gandhiji's Fast.]*

"**I** F I HAD MY WAY I would insist on temple-entry and the like being included in any pact that may be concluded and I would invite all reformers and 'untouchables' to do so. I am aware that temple-entry is a difficult thing to accomplish in the very limited time that my life can hold out against the fast, but all the parties to the pact should pledge themselves to realize this elementary right of human beings at the earliest opportunity. At the same time I do not want this fast to be used for coercing orthodoxy. The fast is certainly intended to sting even orthodoxy into thinking. But if they cannot get on this elementary truth about human rights we must have patience. But temples and the like are the property not of orthodoxy but of all Hindus. Therefore, this idea of excluding a section of Hindus from the use of public utilities is, itself, a species of violence, and, therefore, the support of legislation has got to be invoked in order to protect

Fasting and  
Temple Entry



this fundamental right. I recognize, however, that if the majority of the Hindus are against the exercise of this right by the so-called untouchables, mere legislation will be wholly ineffective. But my opinion is that the mind of the majority is for this reform if it comes stealthily. Therefore, reformers should prepare the ground now ceaselessly and vigilantly to convert the passive attitude towards the reform into active approval thereof. This rising tide of opinion in favour of the reform will convince orthodoxy that it is inevitable. The work, therefore, must be free of all violence, even mental.

"LEGISLATION in a free state always represents the will of the majority. All legislation in advance of general opinion argues bankruptcy of missionary effort. My reliance, therefore, always has been on missionary enterprise. Therefore, for the pact to be a living pact, it is absolutely necessary that it should be a condition precedent to an acceptance of the political part of it, that the Caste Hindus party to the pact will not only endorse it but actively move in the matter. My own opinion is quite clear. I would accept any pact that has not a tinge of separate electorate about it. I would, with the utmost reluctance, tolerate reservation of seats under a joint electorate scheme. But I should insist upon what is to me the vital part of the pact, the social and religious reform. And, therefore, whilst if a settlement is arrived at on the joint electorate scheme and separate electorate is withdrawn by the British Government, I will break my fast, I will immediately give notice to the millions of Hindus, who have flocked round me at the innumerable meetings from one end of India to the other, that if within, say, six months the social reform is not demonstrably achieved the fast will be taken up again. For, if I do not do so I would be guilty of betraying God in whose name I have taken this great fast and the interest of 'untouchables' for whose sake it has been taken,

"I HAVE NOT YET approved of the Nasik Satyagraha about Kalaram Temple for the simple reason that I have smelt a trace of violence in that Satyagraha, and Satyagraha is inconsistent with the slightest violence. I understand also that with reference to temples like Parvati temple there is a difficulty about the trust. The trust deed itself lays an obligation on the trustees to prohibit the entry of 'untouchables' into the temple. Where such a disability exists, I would be able to understand the powerlessness of the trustees. Any Satyagraha in reference to such temples would be pure violence. I would hold that at this time of the day such a condition in any trust should be considered against public morals and, therefore, of no effect. And if such a judgment can be obtained, clearly legislation must step in and render such a clause invalid. Sjt. Rajabhoj fears that if Dr. Ambedkar accepts a reasonable compromise Government may call another leader into being who will declare his opposition, and if that fear is realized there would be eternal opposition by the Government to any pact, and, therefore, my fast must end in my death, and that, therefore, I should give up the fast. Granting that Mr. Rajabhoj's fear is justified I cannot undo a pledge taken with God as witness. We are not able to forecast all future events. We can, therefore, only control our acts, and it is well with us and our cause if we unflinchingly act on the square in spite of the heaviest odds. Our final trust must rest upon the assured victory of truth. Such correct action has without exception confounded the opponents and brought out the intended result, granting of course that the cause is as just as the action is correct. I must not, therefore, on any account, suspend the fast unless its terms are fulfilled."

Sanctity  
of a Vow

## ON STATUTORY RESERVATION

( *Gandhiji's letter to Sjt. Rajabhoj* )

Yeravda Central Prison

September 20, 1932.

DEAR FRIEND,

I got your letter only yesterday whilst I was talking to the friends who came to see me. I am now replying to it at the earliest opportunity. I thank you for your letter.

My position is this. My fast has reference only to separate electorate. As soon as that is withdrawn, the letter of the vow will be satisfied, and I would be bound to call off the fast. But a very heavy responsibility will then lie upon me of having a substitute that is infinitely superior to separate electorate.

If you will not resent my saying it, I would like to say that I am a 'touchable' by birth and an 'untouchable' by choice. And it was in this dual capacity that I wrote to Sir Samuel Hoare and then the Prime Minister. It is that dual capacity that has compelled the fast. Looking at the matter in this light, I must say that I am not in love with the idea of statutory reservation. Whilst it is not open to the same objection that separate electorate is, I have not a shadow of a doubt that it will prevent natural growth of the Suppressed Classes and will remove the incentive

to honourable amends on the part of the suppressors. What I am aiming at is a heart understanding between the two, the greatest opportunity of repentance and reparation on the part of the suppressors. I am certain that the moment is ripe for the change of heart among them. I would, therefore, favour widest possible franchise for the suppressed and establish a convention between the two sections for securing proper election of representatives of the suppressed. I have drafted a rough tentative scheme which I handed to the friends and which I explained fully yesterday to my son Devadas. But to me this is not the largest but it is the least part of the reform I want.

Nothing will satisfy me till the last vestige of untouchability is gone. I would, therefore, insist on a statutory declaration that all public places of worship, wells, schools, etc., should be opened to the suppressed precisely on the same terms as to the suppressors. This is roughly my idea. If, however, the representatives of the Suppressed Classes will not look at my idea, they are at liberty to have statutory reservation of seats. I should not fast against it, but you will not expect me to bless any such scheme. Nor is my blessing essential to its acceptance by the Government. If I got the opportunity, I should certainly try to create public opinion among the suppressed against statutory reservation. If my position is not clear or satisfactory, I would be delighted to meet you and other friends including Rao Bahadur Rajah and Dr. Ambedkar by appointment. As you are aware this has become possible only now.

Yours Sincerely,

(Sd.) M. K. GANDHI

## ‘UNTOUCHABLES FOR EVER’ ?

**M**USLIMS AND SIKHS are all well organized. , The ‘untouchables’ are not. There is very little political consciousness among them and they are so horribly treated that I want to save them against themselves. If they had separate electorates their lives would be miserable in villages which are the strongholds of Hindu orthodoxy. It is the superior class of Hindus who have to do penance for having neglected the ‘untouchables’ for ages. That penance can be done by active social reform and by making the lot of the ‘untouchables’ more bearable by acts of service, but not by asking for separate electorates for them. By giving them separate electorates you will throw the apple of discord between the ‘untouchables’ and the orthodox. You must understand I can tolerate the proposal for special representation of the Musalmans and the Sikhs only as a necessary evil. It would be a positive danger for the ‘untouchables’. I am certain that the question of separate electorates for the ‘untouchables’ is a modern manufacture of . . . Government. The only thing needed is to put them on the voters’ list, and provide for fundamental rights for them in the constitution. In case they are unjustly treated and their representative is deliberately excluded they

\* An extract from Gandhiji’s speech at Indian Students’ Majlis in London last year.

would have the right to special election tribunal which would give them complete protection. It should be open to these tribunals to order the unseating of an elected candidate and the election of the excluded man.

Separate electorates to the 'untouchables' will ensure them bondage in perpetuity. The Musalmans will never cease to be Musalmans by having separate electorates. Do you want the 'untouchables' to remain 'untouchables' for ever? Well, the separate electorates would perpetuate the stigma. What is needed is destruction of untouchability, and when you have done it, the bar sinister which has been imposed by an insolent 'superior' class upon an 'inferior' class will be destroyed. When you have destroyed the bar sinister, to whom will you give the separate electorates? Look at the history of Europe. Have you got separate electorates for the working classes or women? With adult franchise, you give the 'untouchables' complete security. Even the orthodox Hindus would have to approach them for votes.

How then, you ask, does Dr. Ambedkar, their representative, insist on separate electorates for them? I have the highest regard for Dr. Ambedkar. He has every right to be bitter. That he does not break our heads is an act of self-restraint on his part. He is today so much saturated with suspicion that he cannot see anything else. He sees in every Hindu a determined opponent of the 'untouchables', and it is quite natural. The same thing happened to me in my early days in South Africa, where I was hounded out by the Europeans wherever I went. It is quite natural for him to vent his wrath. But the separate electorates that he seeks will not give him social reform. He may himself mount to power and position but nothing good will accrue to the 'untouchables'. I can say all this with authority, having lived with the 'untouchables' and having shared their joys and sorrows all these years,

## ONLY AN APPLE OF DISCORD

[ The creation of various special interests was strongly opposed by Gandhiji in London. He did not deny the right of representatives of particular communities to be elected to the legislatures. But he would have them all contest the election in general electorates and win by right of service. Should, however, the electorate unjustly discriminate against such candidates, Gandhiji suggested a plan whereby persons, who ought to be in the legislatures but failed to get elected through the general constituencies, might be co-opted by the elected members. For this purpose he would even agree to the number of seats being specified. He offered to apply this plan to Christians, Europeans, women, 'untouchables', etc. But he insisted that in the first instance every conceivable interest and community must take its chance in the general electorates. But the communal decision of His Majesty's Government creates an imposing array of special interests with separate electorates. The whole question of special representation is dealt with exhaustively in the following extracts from Gandhiji's speech delivered at a meeting of the Federal Structure Committee in London on 17th September 1931. ]

I COME TO sub-head V, representation by special constituencies of special interests. The Congress has reconciled itself to special treatment of the Hindu-Muslim-Sikh Special Representation Not Wanted tangle. There are sound historical reasons for it. But the Congress will not extend that doctrine in any shape or form. I listened to the list of special interests. So far as the 'untouchables' are concerned, I have not yet quite grasped what Dr. Ambedkar has to say; but, of course, the Congress will share the onus with Dr. Ambedkar of representing the interests of the 'untouchables'. The interests of the 'untouchables' are as dear to the Congress as the interests of any other body or of any other individual throughout the length and breadth of India. Therefore, I would strongly resist any further special representation.

Under adult suffrage labour units certainly do not require any special representation; landlords most decidedly not, and I will give you my reason. There is no desire on the part of the Congress, and there is no desire on the part of our dumb paupers to dispossess landlords of their possessions; but they would have landlords to act as trustees for their tenants. I think that it should be a matter of pride for the landlords to feel that their ryots, the millions living in villages, would prefer them as their candidates and as their representatives to others coming from other parts or someone from among themselves. What will happen is that the landlords will have to make common cause with the ryots; and what can be nobler, what can be better? But, if the landlords insisted on special treatment and special representation in either Chamber, if there are two chambers, or in the one popular Chamber, I am afraid that they would be really throwing the apple of discord into our midst; and I am hoping that no such claim will be put forward on behalf of the landlords or any such interest.



THEN I COME TO my friends the Europeans, whom naturally Mr. Gavin Jones claims to represent. But I would suggest to

Position of Europeans	him humbly that hitherto they have been the privileged class, they have received the protection that this foreign Government could give,
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and that they have received it liberally. If they would now make common cause with the masses of India they need not be afraid, as Mr. Gavin Jones said he was afraid. He read from some document; I have not read it. It may be that some Indians also may say, 'Oh, yes, if Europeans, Englishmen want to be elected by us we are not going to elect them,' but I would undertake to take Mr. Gavin Jones throughout the length and breadth of India and show to him that he will be preferred to an Indian if he will make common cause with us. Take Charlie Andrews. I assure you that he will be elected a delegate in any constituency in India without the slightest difficulty. Ask him whether he has not been received throughout the length and breadth of India with open arms. I could multiply instances. I appeal to the Europeans to try once to live on the goodwill of the people and not seek to have their interests specially safeguarded or protected, which would be the wrong way to go about the business. If they would live in India I would want them to live, I would beseech them to live, as one of us. In any case, I do feel that in any scheme to which the Congress can be party there is no room for the protection of special interests. The special interests are automatically protected when you have got adult suffrage.

SO FAR AS THE Christians are concerned, if I may cite the testimony of one who is no longer with us, I know that he said,

Indian Christians	'We want no special protection,' and I have letters from Christian organizations saying that they wanted no special protection, and that the special protection that they would get would be by right of humble service.
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NOW I COME TO a very delicate point—that is, the oath of allegiance. I am not able to give any opinion just now, because

Oath of Allegiance I want to know what it is to be. If it is to be complete freedom, if it is to be complete independence

for India, the Oath of Allegiance, naturally, will be of one character. If it is to be a subject India, then I have no place there. Therefore, it is not possible for me today to give any opinion upon the question of the Oath of Allegiance.

THEN THE LAST question: what provision, if any, shall be made in each Chamber for nominated members? Well, in the

Nominated Members scheme that Congressmen have adumbrated there is no room for nominated members. I

can understand experts coming, or men whose advice might be sought. They would give their advice and ~~they~~ would retire. I cannot see the slightest justification of clothing them with votes. Votes are given only by popular representatives, if we want to have a democratic institution undiluted. Therefore, I cannot possibly endorse a scheme where there are nominated members.

BUT THAT BRINGS me back to sub-head (v). Supposing I

Special Cases had that in mind—because we have that in the

Congress also—that we want women to be elected, we want Europeans to be elected, we certainly want 'untouchables' to be elected, we want Christians to be elected and I know well enough that these are very large minorities, but still, these are minorities; and supposing that constituencies so misbehave themselves as not to elect women or Europeans or 'untouchables' or, say, landlords, and they do not do so for no reasonable justification whatsoever, I would have, then, a clause in the constitution which would enable this elected Legislature to elect those who should have been but have not been elected. Perhaps, I have not been able to express my meaning clearly.

So I will give you an illustration. We have in one Provincial Congress Council exactly a rule of this character. We have asked the constituencies to elect so many women, so many Musalmans, and so many 'untouchables' to the Council, but if they fail to do so it is done by the elected body, not from among themselves, but from women who might have been candidates or Musalmans who might have been candidates, and thus they will complete the quota. This is what we do. I would not mind, on the contrary I would welcome, some such saving clause in order that constituencies may not misbehave, but in the first instance, I would trust the constituencies to elect all classes of people and not become clannish or be caste-ridden. The Congress mentality, I may assure you, is wholly and absolutely against caste and against the doctrine of superiority and inferiority. Congress is cultivating a spirit of absolute equality.

I am sorry for having taken so much of your time but I am thankful to the Chairman for having given me this indulgence.

[ A discussion followed this speech. ]

Sir Sultan Ahmed : I have a question, I want to put to Mr. Gandhi, if you will permit me to do so. He suggested that, if the requisite number of people for any particular community were not elected, then he would have the power of election given to some other body.

Gandhiji : It is those people who are elected who will elect.

Mr. Iyenger : Co-option.

Gandhiji : Call it co-option. As a layman you would not expect me to use accurate language please.

Sir Sultan Ahmed : But does that not imply that there will be reservation of seats for communities ?

Gandhiji : It need not, as I say there can be a clause of that kind without specifying the number, but I do not mind even the numbers being specified and you will please remember that that did not refer to the Musalmans at all.

Sir Sultan Ahmed: No, I am not talking about Musalmans at all. I am talking about those four classes whom you mentioned, Commerce, Labour, Landlords, and so on. It has nothing to do with Musalmans at all. They do not come into it.

Mrs. Subbarayan: May I also respectfully ask Mahatma Gandhi a question? You referred to the position of women. Suppose the Central Legislature does not have any women on it, then you will have a clause to allow that Legislature to co-opt women?

Gandhiji: I would boycott that Legislature. A legislature that will not elect a proper share of women will be boycotted by me, and I speak for the Congress also. There would certainly be full protection. How it can be brought about is incredibly simple. But I would be no party to a setting up of special constituencies.

— Mrs. Subbarayan: Not special constituencies; but supposing women do not come in by general election, then you will allow the Central Legislature to elect some women?

Gandhiji: Then they have got to enjoy the honour of being elected by the elected legislators before they can conduct their proceedings.



**PART V**  
**SETTING THE SEAL**



## HINDUS RATIFY THE PACT

*[ The following is the text of the resolutions passed at the last meeting of the Hindus' Conference in Bombay on the 25th September and the speeches made in support of the resolutions.\* ]*

### RESOLUTIONS

**T**HIS CONFERENCE confirms the Poona agreement arrived at between the leaders of the Caste Hindus and Depressed Classes on September 24, 1932, and trusts that the British Government will withdraw its decision creating separate electorates within the Hindu community and accept the agreement in full. The Conference urges that immediate action be taken by Government so as to enable Mahatma Gandhi to break his fast within the terms of his vow and before it becomes too late. The Conference appeals to the leaders of the communities concerned to realize the implications of the agreement and of this resolution and to make earnest endeavour to fulfil them.

2. This Conference resolves that henceforth no one shall be regarded as untouchable by reason of his birth and that those who have been so regarded hitherto will have the same rights as other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, pub-

\* *Bombay Chronicle*, 26th September.



lic roads and other public institutions. These rights shall have statutory recognition at the first opportunity and shall be one of the earliest acts of the Swaraj Parliament if it shall not have received such recognition before that time.

#### SPEECHES

PANDIT MADAN MOHAN MALAVIYA commenced his speech by voicing his feelings of thankfulness for the agreement that had been reached at Poona and making a touching reference to the health of Gandhiji. It was wonderful, he said, how Gandhiji was facing the ordeal. He had lost weight and his condition was daily becoming worse. They should all pray to God that circumstances should immediately be brought about that would enable him to put an end to his fast as early as possible. Gandhiji could not stand the fast much longer. He earnestly hoped that the Communal Award would be revised in the light of the Poona Pact. He expressed his gratefulness to all those who took part in the Poona parleys, particularly Dr. Ambedkar and other Depressed Class leaders, for bringing patience, courtesy and excellent spirit to bear upon the entire discussion, but for which it would have been impossible to arrive at an agreement.

THE FIRST PART of the Poona Pact, he said, related to the representation of the Depressed Classes in the future legislatures. This was based on joint electorates with reserved seats. In this connection the Primary Elections Conference was indebted to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru for his suggestion for holding of the primary elections and thus nominating candidates for the elections. The voters of the Depressed Classes on the general list under the Pact would form themselves in an electoral college to nominate four persons for each of the seats which have to be decided by primary elections. This procedure would assure to the Depressed Class community that the nominees through the primary

elections will be members of their own community who commanded confidence of the community.

IT WAS FIRST suggested by Dr. Ambedkar that 71 seats which had been given to them by the Communal Award should

Gandhiji's  
Readiness      be filled by way of primary election and the remaining seats might not be subject to primary elections. When the matter was put before

Mahatma Gandhi, the speaker said, he not only accepted it without hesitation but suggested that he had no objection to filling the remaining seats by the same method, for if it was good in the case of 71 seats it was equally good in the case of all the seats. This had gone a long way in winning over the leaders of the Depressed Classes. By this method the community secured men in whom they had confidence. On the other hand the same men had to depend for their selection upon the votes of the general electorates which helped them to choose the right type of men from the national point of view.

THERE MAY BE some dissatisfaction, continued the speaker, on the ground of the representation which had been given to

Not in a Bar-  
gaining Spirit      • • the Depressed Classes. In considering that they must bear in mind that the agreement was sought not so much in a spirit of

bargaining as with the view to remove from the minds of the leaders of the Depressed Classes the feeling of suspicion and fear that in any other arrangement they won't be able to have their cause pleaded sufficiently and strongly. They wanted to get rid of that suspicion entirely. "I think that feeling has disappeared and that they have no such fear now. The representation which has been secured by them is more than double of what the British Government had given them, on lines materially different," added Panditji.

He thought that there was no justification for entertaining apprehensions that if there were more members of the Depressed Class community the cause of the country would suffer. "I

have not the least doubt that those members of the Depressed Classes who will come in the legislatures through joint electorates will be as patriotic and earnest as anyone else. I hope, therefore, from the point of view of the entire situation and remembering that the desire has been to dispel the feeling of suspicion from the minds of our brethren we shall work out this agreement harmoniously and whole-heartedly, and I have not the least hesitation that the Agreement will meet with general acceptance throughout the country."

Pandit Malaviya drew the attention of the Conference to an important clause contained in the Agreement which provided that the system of primary elections may be put an end to by a mutual agreement of the parties at any time. No less important was the provision laid down that if there was no such agreement for ten years the system of primary elections would automatically cease. He then referred to the other clauses of the Agreement such as the removal of all disabilities now imposed on the community, a provision to earmark adequate funds for the education of the Depressed Classes and removal of other social disabilities.

THE CHAIRMAN in conclusion announced that they were pledged to give effect to the Poona Pact and for that purpose he announced that a small committee should be formed to raise a fund of Rs. 25 lakhs to carry on a campaign from one corner of the country to the other to have the Pact accepted and do away with the stigma of untouchability and social inequalities altogether. He desired that the committee should work ceaselessly and hoped that within three months the desired reforms could be brought about. "The removal of this greatest blot on our religion will not only do no harm to our religion but our religion will shine in greater glory because of its true catholicity." He said there was no room for indolence or delay in carrying out these reforms. "You cannot expect Mahatma Gandhi

Pledged to Carry  
out Poona Pact

to be born twice within a century—not perhaps in many centuries. You cannot expect him to undertake another vow of self-immolation to carry out his heart's desire. That desire is not merely to remove social disabilities now existing but to make the very idea that there are 'untouchables' disappear from the Hindu society."

Dr. Ambedkar : Hear, hear !

PANDITJI CONTINUING said that Gandhiji's object was to see that untouchability was wiped out altogether. "Let us co-operate

Let Us Wipe It Out	with him. We may not be able to fast as he has done, but certainly we can set apart some of our time to carry out what we have decided.
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My appeal to you is this. Let this committee set to work to bring the meaning of these resolutions home to every man in the country, and also take practical steps to bring about the unity that is needed. There is already an upheaval in the country. Much work has been done in the last twelve years, but the work that remains to be done is tremendous, and it is a matter of immense satisfaction and thankfulness that the country as a whole has recognized the gravity of the situation. We hear of wells and temples being thrown open everyday. If we do not succeed in throwing open all the temples today I beg of you to have patience. Perhaps we have waited too long, but there is nothing like patience which in the end is sure to succeed. I have confidence that by legitimate and peaceful means and not by coercion we will be able to achieve success."

Sjt. Mathuradas Vissanji Khimji moved the resolution ratifying the Yeravda Pact.

SIR TEJ BAHADUR SAPRU in supporting the resolution said that although he was speaking in the Indian Merchants'

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru	Chamber he did not propose to make any reference to the profit and loss account of the Poona bargain. Nor did he wish to deal with the religious character of the Agreement which he left to the repre-
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sentatives of orthodoxy present at the meeting. He wanted to examine it from a purely secular and selfish point of view. The fact which, in his opinion, was far more important than any other fact was that the proceedings at Poona were conducted under the chairmanship of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the very embodiment of orthodoxy. If there were people either there or anywhere else who maintained that the Hindu society was immovable or immobile and did not respond to the call of Time, the Poona Agreement was a reply to them.

SIR TEJ BAHADUR then paid a glowing tribute to Pandit Malaviya who, he said, had a higher claim to pure character and

High Priest of Orthodoxy	everything that was best and noblest in Hinduism than any pious high priest. This fact should be given the greatest importance.
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The next important fact was that apart from Pandit Malaviya, who represented the orthodox sentiment of the Hindu community, there were others who were trusted representatives of the Depressed Classes. They were not only trusted by their own community but trusted also by the Government to the extent that they were chosen to represent their community at the Round Table Conference. He referred to Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Srinivasan, the two Depressed Class representatives at the London Conference. "Their representative character, I say, shall not come into question now because that is not fair play."

DR. AMBEDKAR, he said, fought and fought valiantly for the cause which he represented and he promised to be a good

Good Fighter for Future	fighter in the future life of the country. Apart from Dr. Ambedkar there was Mr. Raja who without hesitation agreed to the settlement. He was, therefore, entitled to say that the Agree- ment was supported both by orthodox society and the most authoritative representatives of the Depressed Classes.
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"It may be said by our critics that it required the award of the Prime Minister and the vow of Mahatma Gandhi to rouse the consciousness of the Hindu community. If that be so, then I say in all sincerity that the Prime Minister's award has done us real service. But more than the Prime Minister's award Mahatma Gandhi's vow has done us greater service. We are not assembled here to discuss either the religious character or morality of that vow. But what we are concerned with is, whether we agree with Mahatmaji or not. I do not think there is anyone among us who dare even for a moment to challenge or entertain any doubt about the depth of his conviction.

"I MAY CONFESS that it is my misfortune in certain matters not to see eye to eye with Mahatmaji, but having been brought into touch with him during the last few years  
 Can't Doubt  
 — Gandhi's  
 Sincerity I feel it would be preposterous to doubt his sincerity in regard to the question of the Depressed Classes. In the case of many of us, I hope, I am not giving any offence when I say that nationalism is a mere figure of speech, but to Mahatma Gandhi it is his life-breath.

"I cannot even imagine Mahatma Gandhi in terms of Caste Hindus or any other way than in terms of the nation. When difficult situations arose it was to him that we went to seek advice. And his advice on two points really saved the situation. In fact, he had every claim to represent true nationalism. We accepted his advice and the Agreement has been evolved.

"I will say that it is clearly our duty to stand by that Agreement. I would appeal particularly to the younger generation that it is for these Depressed Classes that Mahatma Gandhi has decided to sacrifice his life. If you go and see him lying under the canopy of the sky, with a bottle of water beside him, answering questions put to him by all of us with an active mind, you feel that he is prepared to sacrifice his life for his con-

viction, and it is due to him that we should do everything with the missionary zeal that is necessary to carry this message from one end of the country to the other. Then alone we shall have rendered real and genuine service to the country and laid truly the foundation stone for Swaraj after which we are hankering."

Speaking in support of the resolution Dr. B. R. Ambedkar who was greeted with cheers when he rose, declared :

" I BELIEVE IT IS no exaggeration for me to say that no man a few days ago was placed in a greater dilemma than I was.

Dr. Ambedkar's Dilemma	There was placed before me a difficult situation in which I had to make a choice between two difficult alternatives.
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"There was the life of the greatest man in India to be saved. There was also before me the problem to try and safeguard the interests of the community which I was in my humble way trying to do at the R. T. C. according to my light. I am happy to be able to say that it has become possible through the co-operation of all of us to find a solution so as to save the life of the Mahatma and consistent with such protection as is necessary for the interests of the Depressed Classes in the future. I think in all these negotiations a large part of the credit must be attributed to Mahatma Gandhi himself. I must confess that I was surprised, immensely surprised, when I met him, that there was so much in common between him and me.

"In fact whenever any disputes were carried to him—and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru has told you that the disputes that were carried to him were of a very crucial character—I was astounded to see that the man who held such divergent views from mine at the R. T. C. came immediately to my rescue and not to the rescue of the other side. I am very grateful to Mahatmaji for having extricated me from what might have been a very difficult situation.

"MY ONLY REGRET is, 'Why did not Mahatmaji take this attitude at the R. T. C.?' If he had shown the same considera-

tion to my point of view then, it would not have been necessary for him to go through this ordeal. However, these are things of the past. I am glad that I am here now to support this resolution.

"SINCE THE QUESTION has been raised in the newspapers as to whether this Agreement will have the support of the whole

Depressed Class community, I should like to make it clear that so far as I am concerned and so far as the party which stands with me is concerned (and I am sure I am also speaking for the other friends who are present here) that we will stand by the Agreement. Let there be no doubt about this.

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"Our only concern is this, whether the Hindu community will abide by it (Voices: Oh yes, we will). We feel that the Hindu community unfortunately is not an integral whole but, if I may say so, a federation of small communities. I hope and trust that the Hindus on their side will look upon this document as sacrosanct and work in an honourable spirit.

"There is just one thing that I would like to say. I am very much obliged to all friends who took part in the negotiations, but I should like particularly to mention Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari. Without Sir Tej Bahadur probably it would have been difficult to carry through many of the points. I must confess as the result of my experience of him for the last two years at the R. T. C., that if there is any man in India who is above all communal prejudice it is Sir Tej Bahadur. His sense of fairness and justice is always a relief to all the minorities who hanker for securing some safeguards in the new constitution.



"I MUST ALSO mention my friend Rajagopalachari. He came to our rescue when we were almost at a breaking-point, and had it not been for his ingenuity probably the Agreement would not have come into being. I must also thank Pandit Malaviya for the courtesy and forbearance that he showed in the hot exchange of words and acrimonious debates that went on during all these negotiations.

"The change that has been brought about in the Communal Award has been brought about by the insistence of the view that separate electorates are injurious to the national interests. I must confess that I remain unconvinced of that argument. I can quite understand that for a majority representation separate electorates are harmful, but I still remain unconvinced that for minority representation separate electorates are an evil.

"I DO NOT BELIEVE that joint electorates are going to be the final solution for the problem of absorbing the Depressed Classes in the Hindu community. Any electoral arrangement, I believe, cannot be a solution of the larger social problem. It requires more than any political arrangement, and I hope that it would be possible for you to go beyond this political arrangement that we are making today and devise ways and means whereby it would be possible for the Depressed Classes not only to be part and parcel of the Hindu community but also to occupy an honourable position, a position of equality of status in the community.

"So long as the Depressed Classes were an ignorant lot, not imbued with a sense of self-respect, it was possible for them to accept the social status that was given to them by Hindu laws, but as they get education they will begin to smart under these social laws and there is a great danger of their seceding from

Hindu society. I beg of you to bear that in mind and hope that you will do the needful in the matter,"

Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah further supported the resolution. He said that he clearly saw a change of heart among the Caste Hindus and that was why he supported the Agreement. He had no doubt at all that the Agreement will have the unstinted support of all the Depressed Class people in the country.

## HINDU MAHASABHA'S RESOLUTION

*[ The following resolution ratifying the Poona Pact was passed unanimously at the Delhi Session of the Hindu Mahasabha on the 26th September. ]*

THE MAHASABHA is delighted to learn that a settlement has been reached between the leaders of the so-called Depressed Classes and the Caste Hindus at Poona, and that a summary of it has been cabled to the Premier for certification and immediate announcement of its acceptance to enable Mahatma Gandhi to break his fast.

The Mahasabha congratulates the leaders of all parties concerned and all the more so Mahatma Gandhi himself on the successful termination of the negotiations.

The Mahasabha is very much concerned at the report on the state of Mahatma Gandhi's health issued by Dr. Gilder, and most earnestly prays to Almighty God to grant Gandhiji strength to bear the heavy strain caused by fasting and the negotiations alike.

The Mahasabha calls upon the Government to dispense with the proposed procedure in consulting the Provincial Governments in the matter, as public opinion in every province has already asserted itself in unmistakable terms in favour of

any settlement that may be arrived at, to save Mahatma Gandhi's life.

The Mahasabha hopes that the Government of India will not delay in transmitting the whole settlement by cable with their approval of the same and urging on the Premier to alter the award accordingly and make the necessary announcement immediately.

## HINDUS' RESOLVE

*[ The following resolutions were passed at a large public meeting in Bombay held on 30th September under the Presidentship of Pandit Malaviyaji. ]*

**T**HIS PUBLIC meeting of Hindus recognizes the Providential grace which saved the life of Mahatma Gandhi at this critical juncture in the history of the country, and conveys its thanks to leaders of Caste Hindus as well as Depressed Classes for the spirit of compromise and co-operation manifested by them during the negotiations which alone led to the final agreement being accepted.

(b) This meeting conveys its respectful greetings to Mahatma Gandhi on the happy termination of his fast, and assures him that a quickening of conscience has been seen in the Hindu community during the last few days on the question of untouchability and that all possible steps will be taken to translate this enthusiasm into action with a view to remove the virus of untouchability from the Hindu community.

II. This public meeting of Hindus resolves that an All-India Anti-untouchability League, with its headquarters at Delhi and branches in different provincial centres, be established for the purpose of carrying on propaganda against the obser-

vance of untouchability, and that for this purpose the following steps should be immediately taken :

(a) All public wells, *dharmashalas*, roads, schools, crematoriums, burning ghats, etc., be declared open to the Depressed Classes.

(b) All public temples be opened to members of the Depressed Classes.

Provided that no compulsion or force shall be used with regard to (a) and (b), but peaceful persuasion will be adopted as the only means.

This meeting appoints Sjt. G. D. Birla as President and Sjt. Amritlal V. Thakkar as General Secretary to take all necessary steps immediately to organize the League and to bring about the fulfilment of its objects.

III. This public meeting of Hindus appeals to the Hindu community to collect as large an amount as possible to be used for the removal of untouchability and cognate objects and for this purpose authorizes the gentlemen named in the second resolution to take all necessary steps.

## CONGRATULATIONS

*[ A few of the telegrams received by Gandhiji after the Agreement had been reached. ]* —

Your telegram and brief news that some settlement has been reached, filled me with relief and joy. The first news of your decision to fast caused me mental agony and confusion, but ultimately optimism triumphed and I regained peace of mind. No sacrifice is too great for the suppressed and the down-trodden classes. Freedom must be judged by the freedom won for the lowest. But I feel there is danger of other issues obscuring the only goal. I am unable to judge from a religious point of view. There is danger of your methods being exploited by others. But how can I presume to advise thee, magician? Love. JAWAHARLAL NEHRU (Dehradun Jail.)

Millions of homes rejoice and bless your superb service performed in your superb style. I confess, I trembled in doubt, but the result vindicates and establishes you as indisputably the foremost 'untouchable' and 'unapproachable'.

SRINIVASA SASTRI (Coimbatore.)

[*Gandhiji's Reply* :

Was daily hankering after your message. It has given me fresh courage and hope. I hope you are well. Love,

GANDHI |

Delighted to hear the Government decision and breaking of your fast. I wish I were there to dine with you for which you invited me. You have now laid the foundation of Indian unity and must now broad-base it by making it comprehensive, but without any more fasts. SAPRU (Allahabad.)

Thank God. Glad for the remarkable success of your precept and practice that self-sacrifice is the key of all success in this life and after. The Gita's promise of '*na me bhaktah pranashyati*' is proved. I feel this result has far-reaching significance. I hope you are already on way to speedy recovery. PRABHASHANKAR PATTANI (Geneva.)

I congratulate you on the greatest triumph of your life. God preserve your life for our country. BOMANJI (New York.)

The news of the Poona Agreement and the breaking of fast was received with great joy today. On this your sixty-fourth birthday we pray to God to restore your health and spare you many more years to serve India's cause.

CAPETOWN UNITED HINDU ASSOCIATION.

Thank God agreement has been reached. Doing everything possible here. My dearest love. ANDREWS.

We thank God for the devoted sacrifice you have made by your fast and the supreme love you have shown. We desire wholeheartedly to reciprocate your love for the British people,



declared in your message to us, and assure you we shall do our utmost in this country to uphold the cause of Indian freedom and the sacred right of Indian people to self-determination. We rejoice in the wonderful victory for the united India your fast has accomplished, and pray God to restore your health so that it may be further used in His service. ANDREWS (on behalf of a meeting.)

Joy for your great soul victory. ROMAIN ROLLAND, MADLIENE ROLLAND.

Irish republicans of the world rejoice and congratulate you on your signal victory over Britain. Continue the fight until your stolen freedom is restored. DENIS MALLOY (National Irish Republic, Chicago.)

Rejoicing. Love. HERMAN KALLENBACH (an old German friend of Gandhiji.)

Thank God your life has been spared. Satyagraha has won an immortal triumph. JOHN HAYNES HOLMES (Brooklyn, U. S. A.)

Egyptian people, men (and) women, who have been following with brotherly sympathy the heroic struggle (of) India and her great chief Mahatma Gandhi for liberty, are now watching with beating hearts Mahatma's sublime act of self-sacrifice for (the) sake of India's unity (and) freedom. As one who had shared with my late husband the joy of working for and obtaining sacred unity of Egypt's children, Mahomedan and Copt as also of other communities of whatever religion or denomination, may I express my sincere hope that India's people inspired by Gandhi's sublime act of self-abnegation would unite in one great mass of brothers and patriots to save India's liberties and save

the life of her great son whose life and work are patrimony of the East and humanity at large. SAFIEH ZAGHILOUL (Cairo.) September 23.

[*Gandhiji's reply:*

Thank you for loving, inspiring message. God's will be done. GANDHI ]

Your resolve to sacrifice your own life, rather than tolerate any measure promoting disunion or caste prejudices amongst Indians has deeply stirred the heart of Egypt, which has, since the last decade, been linked with India by the holy bond of suffering for the same ideal of National self-expression and liberty. Egyptians of all sects and religions, united in love of the Fatherland, are confident that the great Indian people will unite in preserving Mahatma's life by redeeming their sacred unity. All struggling nations of the East look up to India for fulfilling the noble ideal for which Gandhiji is giving up his life. In the name of Egypt and her people, I send you and the Indian people our brotherly love and heartfelt wishes for realization of ideals of truth, freedom and equality as embodied in the great example, you are setting before the world. MOUSTAPHA NAHAS, President, Egyptian Wafd, (Alexandria, Egypt.) September 24.

[*Gandhiji's reply:*

Deeply touched by your message. May this purificatory fast touch all faiths and bring them and us together in a living bond. Egyptian blanket presented to me during last voyage covers me during this struggle with Allah who is great and merciful. GANDHI ]

## MR. SASTRI'S SPEECH

*[At a thanksgiving garden party given by Sjt. C. V. Venkatraman Iyengar at Coimbatore, on the successful termination of Gandhiji's fast, Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri delivered a speech from which the following is an extract.\*]*

LET THEM think just one minute of what had happened. They all rejoiced. Well, Mr. Vonkatraman Iyengar was very happy in his reference to the termination of the fast. Yes, but did they not see that, in announcing that very termination the Mahatma had had to give his solemn warning, for from his mouth no word came which was not charged with a warning or a promise—how could they forget that, at the very moment of announcing the termination of this fast, he had almost threatened the commencement of another? Well, those that had passed through the anxiety of the last few days would not like to repeat that experience. Would they? They all joined in the prayer that that threatened fast should never happen. In other words, that the further stages of this great reform, of which only the first stage had been accomplished, should be prepared for and should be made to materialize by them. They should of necessity help in it.

f.  
\* Hindu.

They were all Tamil-speaking people. They came from that country, they all worshipped in the temples in that country to which the Mahatma had made a very pointed reference. The Mahatma said the keenest part of his anguish was caused by the circumstance that while the shrines and temples of great importance had been thrown open to everybody in this country in the north and west of India, it was they in the south who had made what he described a very feeble response. And he further on said that he had cause for keen disappointment in that matter because, he thought, he had a special right to their affection and their gratitude. What was the real meaning of this? During the time that he, Mahatma Gandhi, was running the passive resistance movement, his great experiment in Satyagraha in South Africa, his most trusted, his bravest, his most unflinching followers were the Tamilians from the south of India. It was the Depressed Classes people from Tanjore and South Arcot districts, it was they who night and day were ready at his call, never caring how much he took out of them. One man who was shot in those days became a martyr. He belonged to a place near Tranquebar, and one of the first things that Gandhiji did on returning home about 17 years ago, was to make, what he called the most pious pilgrimage of his life, to the village where that man was born. He, the speaker, had the unique privilege of attending Gandhiji during that pilgrimage. The speaker remembered vividly what happened on the occasion, especially how Gandhiji used all his eloquence and the almost irresistible power of his personality in persuading the ignorant widow of that martyr to surrender to him as his adopted son one of his children. Gandhiji had learned Tamil for, he said, he must be able to talk to these loyal people in their own tongue. Unfortunately, he was not a very good linguist and his preoccupations were so intense and so varied that he could not make much progress. But the few

words he knew he used frequently and to good purpose and with evident pleasure.

Now that gave them the secret why Gandhiji felt that in this Tamil land he was entitled to a liberal and enthusiastic response in this most vital matter that he had taken up, namely, the throwing open of all their temples and their sacred shrines to the Depressed Classes from whom that martyr and other gallant sufferers during the first passive resistance campaign were drawn. Now that he, the speaker, had explained this to them, they could understand the inwardness of the man's agony when he saw that in this land where his heart lay the response was so thin, so disappointing. It rested with them, therefore, how they helped in the consummation of that great purpose, that the further stages in the elevation of the Depressed Classes were accomplished well, at comparatively smaller cost.

However much he, the speaker, respected and venerated Gandhiji, there was one matter in which he did not happen to agree with him. Gandhiji seemed to think somehow or other that dead Gandhi would be more potent in India than living Gandhi. Let him think so and let him repeat it a hundred times. He was not going to convince him, the speaker, nor any of them. They wanted him to live long and to labour for all public causes. If he must die, as all men must, let him die when the time was ripe, when he had done his job. He, the speaker, would say that Gandhiji had hardly begun, especially the Depressed Classes' question upon which his authority was so great. He had a good deal yet to do now. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya said the other day that they could not get another like Gandhiji to be born amongst them for a long time. The speaker would say that that was his advice to South India. If Gandhiji was going to die by entering upon another fast, well, there was no doubt that this Tamil land, the land of that martyr of Tranquebar, would be responsible. It was a terrible responsibility they were going to incur. India was not going to pardon

them easily. Let them take that word. They might be happy for a moment that Gandhiji had been saved. But he had been saved only to be imperilled again. They could all do something to prevent that catastrophe happening and to save the good name of the Tamil Nad. He should have spoken much less, but mention of this important event in Poona could not happen without drawing the inmost heart out of anybody. Now that they had understood, they could do what they liked. But let them never make excuse of one kind or another. Economy was needed in everything. There was such a thing as economy even in the use of the tremendous moral power which Mahatma Gandhi had placed at their disposal by his severe *tapas*.

## LEADERS' OPINIONS ON THE PACT

**I**N MY OPINION the Agreement arrived at should open a new chapter in the life of Hindu society. I will strongly maintain that if we want really to have genuine self-government, we ought to show that we are prepared to do justice to those to whom we have denied it for centuries past. Although we may have been late in solving the problem, yet it is something to have taken, even at this stage, a decisive step.

TEJ BAHADUR SAPRU

Although we are very pleased with what has happened in Poona we realize that it is only the beginning of a process which must be pushed on if Hindu Society has to be regenerated and a nation built up.

M. R. JAYAKAR

Joyed beyond measure to hear of the settlement. The terms of the settlement appear after all to be more reasonable than originally proposed. The settlement will create a good

auspices for the rapprochement of Caste Hindus and 'untouchables'. God be praised that Mahatma Gandhi is saved.

N. C. KELKAR

I am very happy to have been able to relieve Mahatmaji of the obligations of his vow and equally happy that the interests of the Depressed Classes have been protected. I was greatly impressed by the sincerity of his opinion, and I greatly admire his readiness to appreciate my point of view which was so radically different from his.

I would like to add that but for Gandhiji, the settlement would have been very difficult. During the discussion there were many points of difficulty, which, but for the conciliatory attitude of Gandhiji, would never have been settled and negotiations would have broken down.

DR. AMBEDKAR

This latest experiment of Mahatmaji in Satyagraha can only be undertaken with justification by the souls that have attained Mahatmaji's power of love. It is not a matter for imitation. There is no thought in my head except the sense of relief and that tomorrow which is Gandhiji's birthday according to Hindu calendar is a veritable re-birthday.

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

I was happy when the agreement was made between Caste Hindus and Depressed Classes, and happier when I find it has been accepted by the British Government today, and happier still I shall be when the Hindu community will have fully and completely washed off this intolerable stain of



untouchability. The week which commences tomorrow ought to find us making tremendous strides towards it.

RAJENDRA PRASAD

The age of miracles, it is said, is past, but the Hindus, under the inspiration of Gandhiji, have wrought a miracle. Within the twinkling of an eye agelong prejudices have been conquered and buried five fathoms deep, never, I hope, to raise their heads again. The Hindu community has proved to the world that it is not unworthy of its glorious past. Today is a day of rejoicing for all Indians, because the greatest curse of India, untouchability, has been removed within a bewilderingly short period of four days. The Hindu community stands purified and much stronger today than it ever was within the last ten centuries. May I respectfully congratulate Mahatmajī and the great Hindu community on the performance of such a miracle? Will it be too much to expect Hindus to solve other comparatively easier problems of India within the next four weeks, and thus bring Indian politics to a higher plane from where its accredited leaders can look straight in the face of her enemies? I would appeal to Hindus to open the portals of their hearts to the Musalmans and Christians. I assure them that the heart of the Muslim community is sound, and it will respond beyond expectations the moment its finer chord is touched. The Christian community is simply waiting to be appealed to.

DR. SYED MAHAMUD

## ANTI-UNTOUCHABILITY WEEK

*[Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari and Babu Rajendra Prasad issued the following statement to the Press on September 26.]*

THE NATION has left nothing undone to make the British Premier recall his decision regarding the representation of the Depressed Classes in the future legislatures of the country and save Mahatma Gandhi's life. We appeal to every man and woman in the country to offer thanks to God Almighty.

We rejoice at the agreement which has been reached without one dissentient voice, but we should remember that all the terms and implications therein have yet to be fulfilled before God. Let us then devote this 'Untouchability Abolition Week' sincerely to realize these duties and give ourselves body and soul to their fulfilment in the fullest measure. That is possible at once.

On Tuesday the 27th, in every town and village throughout the country, there should be meetings of all classes of peoples to congratulate all those who have brought about the settlement and to confirm it on behalf of the so-called high and of the 'untouchable' castes and demand the recall of separate electorates within the Hindu community so as to give back Mahatmaji's precious life to the nation.

September 27, be it remembered, is Mahatmaji's birthday according to the Hindu calendar, and if we save him now, it is truly a rebirth. On October 2, there should be again meetings all over the country duly confirming the settlement in full on behalf of all sections of the Hindu community including the Depressed Classes, and the minutes should be formally recorded and sent up to Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya throughout the week, and on these two days there should be a daily programme for the removal of untouchability.

It is this daily programme and truthful, unexaggerated reports of its fulfilment from all parts of the country that will, even after receipt of the Premier's withdrawal of his decision and Mahatmaji's breaking the fast thereupon, put joy into his soul and strength into his famished frame.

Each locality may devise its own programme but with this single end in view. Joint prayers for health and strength to Mahatmaji, everyday, should be a principal feature. These prayer meetings, including men and women of the so-called Depressed Classes may be held in the precincts of temples wherever the necessary consent may be secured. Processions should be organized of caste people into the 'untouchable' quarters and *vice versa*, carrying the glad tidings of the settlement into every nook and corner of the country and celebrating the heart change. Wherever the necessary consent can be secured the ceremonial openings of temples, wells, etc., should be another prominent feature of the programme of the week. Throughout the week individuals should invite members of the so-called Depressed Classes to their houses for *pan supari*. This affords an opportunity to students and other young men individually as well as collectively to make a solid contribution to the cause of their effective and enthusiastic work. *Bhajan* parties, *Sankirtans* and *Kathas* should be organized to which members of the Depressed Classes should be particularly invited. Fraternization by visits

to the residences of the so-called untouchables, especially on the part of women, would be of great value.

Appeals should be made by literature, meetings, placards, *bhajan* parties, etc., to end the curse of untouchability. Signatures should be secured during the week for memorials to be forwarded to the trustees of temples, heads of *maths* and religious communities and public institutions and abolishing distinctions against the so-called untouchables. Every form of intensive propaganda within the creed of non-violence should be vigorously employed during this week and men and women induced to sign pledges of abolition.

Let no one talk of difficulties. This call has come and the time is ripe for the abolition of untouchability once for all.



PART VI  
THE AGREEMENT DISCUSSED



## WHAT THEY HAVE GAINED

BY AMRITLAL V. THAKKAR

**I**N ORDER TO COMPREHEND the political significance and constitutional implication of the Agreement between Caste Hindus and the Depressed Classes concluded at Yeravda, which has now replaced the terms of the Prime Minister's Communal decision as a result of Mahatma Gandhi's fast, it is necessary to examine the problem in its historical background. We might begin this brief study from the Report of the Statutory Commission.

The Simon Commission in their recommendations about the representation of the Depressed Classes stated as follows at page 67, Vol. II of their Report:

"We propose that when the definitions are settled and the correct totals ascertained, the number of seats to be reserved for Depressed Class candidates in the non-Mahomedan constituencies should be settled on the following principle. The proportion of the number of such reserved seats to the total number of seats in all the Indian general constituencies should be *three quarters* of the proportion of the Depressed Class population to the total population of the electoral area of the province."



The phrase 'Indian General Constituencies' in the above extract apparently means the sum total of the seats assigned to the different Indian constituencies as distinguished from the European seats and special interests' seats.

Since the Simon Commission's Report was written, the question of adult franchise has been discussed in detail by the Franchise Committee, popularly known as the Lothian Committee. Though adult franchise has been rejected by this Committee as impracticable under the present circumstances, the distribution of seats between the different major communities—Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs—has been based more or less upon the ratios of their respective population.

With regard to the Depressed Classes, who form a section of the Hindu constituency or (in the phraseology of the Prime Minister's decision) of the general constituency, their numbers have been calculated very carefully by the Lothian Committee and by the different Provincial Franchise Committees. All of them have arrived at an agreement with regard to their numbers in all the provinces except Bengal and the U. P. During the recent negotiations at Poona between the leaders of Caste Hindus on the one side and of the Depressed classes (Harijans) on the other, the population of the following six provinces was agreed upon as correct by both sides :

Provinces	Total population	Total Hindu and other population	Depressed classes population
Madras ... ..	46.74	41.66	7.1
Bombay including Sind ...	21.88	17.15	1.7
Punjab ... ..	23.58	6.77	1.3
Bihar and Orissa ... ..	37.68	33.07	4.3
C. P. ... ..	15.50	14.77	2.9
Assam ... ..	8.62	5.62	0.65

The figures are in millions.

With regard to the province of Bengal, the leaders of the two sections of the Hindu community agreed upon 7·50 millions as the population of the Depressed Classes, which was also the figure that was accepted by the Lothian Committee ( vide page 117 of the Report ). But the question of the population of the Depressed Classes in the U. P. has been a subject of controversy and remains unsolved till now. On the one hand, the Government of the U. P. bases its figure of 6·77 millions on the note of Mr. Blunt, a member of the U. P. Government, which has indicated 'those classes for which there can be no doubt that special consideration is required' and not 'untouchables' only. The U. P. Government, however, in their final reply to the Lothian Committee observed as follows :

" Government are informed that the Chairman of the Indian Franchise Committee has given a definition to the Chairman of the Provincial Committee which would confine Depressed Classes to those who cause pollution by touch or approach as it exists in this Province. If so, the actual number would be reduced to 4,59,000, and on that definition it would be impossible to secure representation for other than those restricted classes."

Thus the difference between the two estimates of 6·77 millions and 0·46 millions, both supplied by the U. P. Government, owing to different definitions of the word 'Depressed' is striking and unaccountable. In the Poona negotiations, however, the mean figure between 6·77 millions proposed by Dr. Ambedkar and 4·63 as suggested by Caste Hindu leaders was adopted as a compromise, *vis.*, 5·7 millions.

The Prime Minister had in his Communal Decision of August last fixed the strength of the various provincial councils and the number of seats assigned to the Hindus including others. It became easy to calculate, by mere rule of three, the number of seats that should be reserved by Caste Hindus to their suppressed brethren.

But Dr. Ambedkar fixed his calculation on another principle altogether. His argument was that he must get his reserved seats in the same proportion to the total of all communal seats as the proportion of the Depressed Class population to the total population in a province. He objected to his section's seats being calculated on the basis of Hindu seats and Hindu population only. His contention was that his community could not afford to be a partner in the loss caused to Hindus and 'others' by the weightage given to Muslims and other minority communities, and that the loss must be borne wholly by the Caste Hindus. According to his method of calculation, the total number of seats in the eight provinces came to 175 (not 197 as he had previously put forward in a statement to the press), but the number of seats calculated on the basis of the proportion of the Depressed Classes to the Hindu population was computed at 123 only. A happy mean was, however, struck without any wrangling between the two figures, and a total of 148 seats was duly agreed upon by mutual consent as shown in the table below :

Province			Seats claimed by Dr. Ambedkar	Seats offered by Caste Hindus	Seats finally agreed upon
Madras	...	...	33	26	30
Bombay	...	...	16	11	15
Punjab	...	...	10	8	8
Bihar & Orissa	...	...	20	15	18
C. P.	...	...	21	17	20
Assam	...	...	8	6	7
Bengal	...	...	37	27	30
U. P.	...	...	30	13	20
			175	123	148

According to the principle enunciated in the Simon Commission Report, quoted in the beginning of this article, the Depressed Classes were entitled to  $175 \times \frac{3}{4} = 131$  seats. Hence

they have by the Poona agreement got 17 more seats than they would have obtained on the basis referred to above.

Some people compare the 118 seats agreed upon with the 71 seats awarded by the Premier in August last, and conclude that too much has been surrendered to the Depressed Classes. But they forget that in addition to these 71 seats the Depressed Classes had the privilege of contesting other seats in the Hindu or 'General' constituency. Moreover, it is essential to remember that separate electorates for the Depressed Classes would have existed at least for twenty years, while under the Yeravda agreement, they have been immediately done away with.

It must be acknowledged, however, that the agreement provides that the reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes is to be accompanied by primary elections of four candidates to each reserved seat: an expedient which does vitiate the underlying purpose of joint electorate at least partially. But it is hoped that in the actual working of elections the Depressed Classes candidates will themselves feel the heavy expense and trouble entailed by the double elections and may voluntarily do away with the primary elections replacing them by nominations of their candidates by their parties.

It should be emphasized that the spirit of mutual adjustment evinced by both sides would not have come about so swiftly but for the solemn challenge of Mahatma Gandhi to 'fast unto death'. It was the Damocles' sword which hung over the heads of all who participated in the negotiations during those six critical days that did the trick. The saving of Gandhiji's life constitutes by itself sufficient justification of the Yeravda agreement. But apart from the unity which the historical fast established between the so-called Caste Hindus and those whom they have regarded as 'untouchables', apart also from the important breach it made in the Premier's decision, the moral value of the agreement cannot be exaggerated. It showed Britain

and the world that Hinduism still has social vitality and cultural homogeneity and can still mould and determine its political destiny by its own efforts. It is not too much to claim that through the fast, Hinduism has realised its entity and has effectively answered the oft-repeated supercilious and ironical challenge of the British Prime Minister and the Cabinet to Indians to solve their communal problems themselves. If the communal decision justified the apprehensions of the nationalists, the Yeravda agreement is a vindication of the attitude of Mahatma Gandhi at the Round Table Conference when he refused to join the appeal of several Indian Delegates to the Premier to arbitrate their differences.

## DR. AMBEDKAR'S PROPOSALS

*[ The following are Dr. Ambedkar's draft proposals based on Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's scheme for the representation of the Depressed classes in the legislatures that were published by him on September 21. ]*

### PART I

(A) The Depressed Classes shall have the following number of seats in the provincial legislatures :—

Madras	...	...	...	...	30 out of 215
Bombay	...	...	...	...	16 out of 200
Bengal	...	...	...	...	50 out of 250
Punjab	...	...	...	...	50 out of 175
United Provinces	...	...	...	...	40 out of 228
Behar & Orissa	...	...	...	...	20 out of 175
C. P. & Berar	...	...	...	...	20 out of 112
Assam	...	...	...	...	11 out of 108

(B) The method of election to these seats shall be by joint electorates and reserved seats, provided that for the first ten years, in 18 single constituencies in Madras, 10 single constituencies in Bombay, the Central Provinces, and in Bengal, in 4 single constituencies in Assam, in 7 single constituencies in Behar and Orissa, in 5 single constituencies in the Punjab, and in 12 single constituencies in the U. P, there

shall be held before the general election a primary election of the voters of the Depressed Classes for electing two persons to constitute a panel who thereafter shall contest on behalf of the Depressed Classes in the joint electorate.

(C) After the first ten years the system of primary election shall cease to be in operation and all seats without exception shall continue to be filled by direct election on the system of joint electorates and reserved seats.

(D) The right of the Depressed Classes to special representation through joint electorates and reserved seats shall be continued to them for a further period of fifteen years. After the said period the matter shall be settled on the basis of referendum of the voters of the Depressed Classes.

(E) The right of the Depressed classes to special representation in both houses of the Central Legislature shall be recognized on a population ratio on the same terms and in the same manner as is provided for in case of the Provincial Legislatures.

(F) There shall be adult suffrage at least for the Depressed Classes. The franchise of those classes shall be the same for the Provincial and the Central Legislatures.

## PART II

1. The Depressed Classes shall be allowed representation in all the provinces, in all municipalities, local boards, districts and taluka village unions, school boards or punchayets and any local body now existing or to be constituted in the future, on the population basis.

2. In all the public services, central and local, the Depressed Classes shall be guaranteed appointments according to their population ratio as a minimum, subject to qualifications as may be laid down for the same. Provision shall be made for reaching the quota by relaxing the statutory rules that may be in existence in matters other than educational qualifications,

3. In every province, out of the educational grant a sum equivalent to the population ratio of the Depressed Classes in that province shall be earmarked as a minimum for providing educational facilities to the Depressed Classes.

4. There shall be a provision in the Constitution allowing the Depressed Classes the right of appeal to the Governor and the Viceroy for any neglect of their interest in the matter of education, sanitation, recruitment in the public services, etc., on the same terms and in a manner provided in the Constitution of Canada ( Section 93 ).





PART VII  
STATEMENTS OF PUBLIC MEN



## EXTRACT GOOD OUT OF EVIL

BY PANDIT MADAN MOHAN MALAVIYA

THE COUNTRY has been stunned by the news that Gandhiji has decided to fast himself to death unless the provision in the decision of the British Government, that the special seats assigned to the Depressed Classes will be filled by election from special constituencies in which only members of the Depressed Classes electorally qualified will be entitled to vote, is withdrawn by the British Government and is replaced by one providing that representatives of the Depressed Classes will be elected by the general electorate under a common franchise, no matter how wide it is. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald has coldly said that the decision of the British Government stands, but he has added that by agreement the communities themselves can substitute other electoral arrangements for those that the Government have devised. There is no Hindu who has done more, both by precept and example, for the uplift of the Depressed Classes than Gandhiji. He has frequently stated that he regards special electorates for the Depressed Classes as harmful to them as to Hindus and Hinduism. He has given conclusive proof of his conviction by his resolution to give up

\* Statement issued to the press on September 13.

his life as a last protest against perpetuating the segregation of the Depressed Classes and widening the gulf between them and the rest of the Hindu community, which Gandhiji and other Hindu reformers have been doing their very best to bridge up. The British Government do not seem to be perturbed by the thought that the life of the most honoured Indian should be sacrificed at the altar of their decision, but no Indian can bear the thought of such a loss to the motherland and to mankind.

It is a matter of pain that we were not able to come to an agreement amongst ourselves regarding the representation of the Depressed Classes as also generally of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the legislatures of the future. But it will be a national disaster and an indelible shame if leaders of the Depressed Classes and of the rest of the Hindu community fail, even in the face of the loss which stares us, to arrive at an agreement on this question. Despite our failure in the past, I honestly believe that there is enough of patriotism and devotion to religion among us to help us to arrive at an agreement, which will satisfy the reasonable desire of the leaders of the Depressed Classes to take their proper share in the public life of India without putting them in a separate pen and segregating them from the rest of the community, in which they are born and to which they adhere in spite of the disadvantages to which they have been exposed.

I appeal to all my brethren of the Depressed Classes and to all other Hindu leaders to meet and discuss the matter with a determination to come to an agreement, and in view of the fact that Gandhiji's fast begins on 20th instant, I propose that a few of us should meet at Delhi on 17th and 18th instant, and arrive at an agreement and thus extract good out of evil.

## QUICKENING BRITISH CONSCIENCE

BY C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

**T**HE ONLY hope now left for us is that the policy of the British Government may be revised before it becomes too late to save Mahatmaji's life. Taking into account his health and his present age, one fears that he may not stand as many days of starvation as he did on former occasions. If nothing is done, and the fast terminates fatally, the result will be too awful to contemplate.

Satyagraha of this type may, in spite of its glory, fail to move age-long ignorance and superstitious fear, but where it may be ineffective against dense ignorance, it should not certainly be ineffective against the obstinacy of the British Government and in quickening the conscience of British statesmen. The Premier and his colleagues admit that the creation of a caste electorate goes contrary to the principles of democracy and the progress of national unity. Herein, they are in entire agreement with Mahatmaji, who looks upon the 'Award' as opposed to national unity. The Premier justifies an essentially wrong step on the ground that he should safeguard the interests of a particular group of people. Surely, other arrangements can be discovered for safeguarding what is really in danger. Safeguarding is one thing, but merely satisfying advocates is another thing.

\*Statement issued to the press on September 17.

## A GRIEVOUS INJURY

BY C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

**A**S FAR AS I know Mahatmaji never intended to offer this kind of Satyagraha for winning political freedom for India.

The question, therefore, of a smaller or bigger political issue does not arise. I do not think he would approve of anyone starving himself to death to secure a good Swaraj constitution. The protest that he is now making is against the British Government dealing a mortal blow to the cause of the removal of untouchability. He objects to a scheme which undoes the work that is going on for the removal of social bars against the so-called untouchables. He feels that one of his life missions is to make Hindus treat these classes as full, equal members of the community. The separate electorates that are created for them will mean that the present status will be continued for 20 years. He feels that there is a grievous injury to the cause of 'untouchables' that is inflicted on them in the guise of benefit and special advantage. This injury he feels he should resist with his life. He thinks that this cause is so sacred as to justify laying down his life, as from prison he could not persuade or take any other steps to convince the British Government or prevent the calamity.

\* A special statement to the 'Daily Herald' of London, September 19.

## CALL FOR COURAGEOUS ACTION

BY DABU RAJENDRA PRASAD

TODAY'S PAPERS publish the correspondence between Gandhiji and the Premier and the Secretary of State. Gandhiji's reasons for his momentous decision are fully explained, but the Premier's reply imputing to him an inconceivably unworthy motive may create misunderstanding in unthinking minds. The Premier's plea that no separate electorates for the Depressed Classes are created by his decision cannot stand

scrutiny. It is stated in so many words in that decision, that a number of seats will be assigned to the Depressed Classes and that "these seats will be filled by election from special constituencies in which only members of the Depressed Classes electorally qualified will be entitled to vote." It is true that the scheme there adumbrated differs in some particulars from that for the Musalmans, but no camouflage or jugglery of words can conceal the fact that separate electorates are given.

Even the Simon Commission was "averse to stereotyping the differences between the Depressed Classes and the remainder of the Hindus by such a step, which we consider would introduce a new and serious bar to their ultimate political amalgamation with others." The Commission proceeds further to state: "Such a course would be all the more difficult to justify in those provinces where the breaking down of the barriers has advanced furthest. If separate electorates have to be maintained for certain classes which have already secured them, that is no reason for bringing other classes within this mode of treatment, if it can be avoided. A separate electorate for the Depressed Classes means, as a preliminary, a precise definition of all who are covered by the term, and the boundary would be in some cases difficult to draw. It means stigmatizing each individual voter in the list, and militates against the process which is already beginning and which needs to be in every way encouraged—that of helping those who are depressed to rise in the social and economic scale." The Commission winds up by saying that "it is in the interest of the Depressed Classes themselves to avoid so absolute a segregation." Gandhiji says nothing more when he asserts that the Government decision will "arrest the marvellous growth of the work of Hindu reformers who have dedicated themselves to uplift their suppressed brethren in every walk of life."

It is not enough, however, to expose the fallacious and mischievous insinuation of the Premier. The Hindu community



has to solve the problem of the Depressed Classes if Gandhiji's life is to be saved for the nation and the world. There are two aspects of the question, and both need to be tackled. There is the social, or as Mahatmaji would like to call it, the moral and religious side of it. It behoves all Hindus to tackle it in a courageous manner and remove the blot on Hinduism by completing the work of admitting the so-called Depressed Classes to social equality in the matter of right of *darshan* in temples, drawing water from wells, education in schools, and use of public roads, etc. It rests entirely with the Hindu community to settle these questions practically and in a way which will unmistakably establish that the so-called untouchables are in no way different from other Hindus.

The crisis created by Mahatmaji's announcement calls for immediate and courageous action. Hindu society is on its trial, and if it has life in it, it must respond with a great and magnificent act. Political issues can then be more easily settled in an atmosphere of goodwill at a conference of the leaders of the parties concerned. It is nobody's intention, least of all Gandhiji's, to deprive the Depressed Classes of their due and more than their due representation. Let that be secured in a generous and ungrudging spirit without cutting up Hindu society and treating the Depressed Classes even for a temporary period as separate from it.

Goodwill can and will conquer distrust. The time is short. The issues are momentous. Let the Hindu community as a whole, including the Depressed Classes, reach an agreement without loss of time and press the British Government to revise its decision on the point at issue and save the life of the great leader who is loved and revered not only by millions in his own country, but commands the esteem and admiration of the world at large. I suggest holding of public meetings to mobilize public opinion without delay.

## JUST LIKE HIM

BY G. D. BIRLA

**A**LTHOUGH I am very much upset, I am not at all surprised at the decision of Gandhiji. It is just like him—a man who means everytime what he says. It is rather painful that his warning to the Secretary of State in his letter of 11th March last was not taken seriously. The crisis undoubtedly is very grave, but God willing, good can come even out of evil, and although tragedy is looming large on the Indian horizon I feel we shall be able to overcome the worst apprehensions. This does not mean, however, that the country should watch the coming events nonchalantly. It is the duty of every man and woman to do his or her best to secure a satisfactory solution.

In my opinion, it is not difficult to have a satisfactory pact with the Depressed Classes which may eventually be accepted by the Government. But nothing is possible without the influence and guidance of Gandhiji. The duty of the Government is thus clear, and without losing a moment they should release Gandhiji and other important leaders. Time is precious, and I hope it is fully realized by the Government what a grave responsibility they will be taking on themselves if they waste their time in preventing the catastrophe.

The duty of the Depressed Classes is also very clear. Who is a greater well-wisher of them than Gandhiji? Those in England may not know, but nobody in India can for a moment challenge Gandhiji's claim to represent the interests of the Depressed Classes. If a referendum were taken, I have not the least doubt that 99 per cent of the Depressed population will vote in favour of Gandhiji. The responsibility of the leaders of the Depressed Classes is thus no less onerous than that of others; and I hope they will come out solidly and rally round Gandhiji.

\* Statement issued to the press on September 13.

## THE GREAT ISSUE

BY DEVADAS GANDHI

**I** STRONGLY resent the insinuation in the British Prime Minister's letter to Gandhiji, as regards the motives of the fast. It is unworthy of a man occupying his exalted office. Even in London last year he refused to believe in Gandhiji's good faith, and he has done it again. No wonder they did not have even a heart to heart talk during the Round Table Conference. The Premier is contradicted not only by official spokesmen in India but even by some die-hard newspapers in England.

I was shocked, but not surprised, by the news of the grave step taken by my father. He had given a very clear indication of his attitude on the particular issue of the Depressed Classes. He dislikes separate electorates for any community. He would fain have adopted the extreme step of sacrificing his life on the general issue of what he calls parcelling India into various separate and warring groups, but when he found that some of his own distinguished countrymen held views diametrically opposed to his, there was no alternative but to give way. The question of the Depressed Classes is totally different, for the reasons clearly explained in his own letters.

Had an opportunity been vouchsafed to me to discuss the matter with him before he took his decision, I know I would have been impelled by sheer personal attachment to strive with him to the utmost of my ability in order to dissuade him from the course he has adopted. But I now am free to express my profound faith in the cause for which he is prepared to give up his life. Humbly and prayerfully, I for my part, have come to the conclusion that the issue is well worth the sacrifice, if God wills that it shall be made. As a reformer he feels that the decree of the British Government, awarding separate electorates to the Depressed Classes, is bound to cripple his powers

\* Statement issued to the press on September 16.

of serving the 'untouchables' and, under Swaraj, of persuading Hindu society to make the fullest reparation to them. He is now risking his life in resisting the attempt, however unconscious, of the British Government, to do irreparable harm to the Depressed Classes and to Hindu society. His vow is the expression of the anguish of his soul caused by the callous indifference of Government to all patient reasoning.

But we must not fall into the error of imagining that he has made up his mind to die. Indeed, if it was possible for him to do so he would tell us that he would like to live to see, at some distant date in the future, even Mr. Ramsay MacDonald acknowledge his sincerity. But it is clear that he will live, if he can, on his own terms. I am glad that his action is going to deal a heavy blow to untouchability and the like. There is everywhere a desire among Hindus to do all they possibly can to remove the social disabilities of the Depressed Classes. It largely rests with the young men now, to give tangible expression to the feeling. One of the declarations that Gandhiji made to journalists in England was that in a self-governing India he would insist on the removal of such disabilities by legislation. But before that can be undertaken, something can be done even at this juncture. Whether Gandhiji lives or not, untouchability should die. That is the programme during this crisis for those who have little faith in British Government doing the right thing at the right time.

While I am prepared for the worst, I am sustained by the conviction that my father will live if the cause, not merely of Hindu unity but of all-Indian unity, is to be better served by his not dying. I feel it is possible to arrive at an agreement with the Depressed Class leaders, which would give them much more than the award. But, as regards the attitude of the Government, I cannot resist the feeling that they could have, consistently with all their principles, acted differently and thereby avoided the crisis.

## GIVE HIM A CHANCE

BY SIR TEJ BAHADUR SAPRU

THE CORRESPONDENCE between Mahatma Gandhi and the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State published this morning, will evoke the deepest feelings all over India, among those who follow and do not follow his lead alike. It can only have one end, and that is, Mahatmaji must be released before he enters upon his supreme self-sacrifice. In the present state of chaotic confusion of opinion on the communal question in particular, he is the only man who can contribute anything to the solution of the problem by mutual agreement. If he should fail, I can think of no other person who can succeed. But he must be given a chance before the twelfth hour is reached. His life must be saved. That is the immediate point. No wise Government can afford to take risks in a matter of this character, and the situation already very complicated should not be allowed to become still more complicated. On the other hand, I feel that Mahatmaji may yet make his contribution to the restoration of peaceful conditions all round.

\* Statement issued to the press on September 13.

## HINDUISM ON TRIAL

BY ACHARYA P. C. RAY

GANDHIJI will face death cheerfully and with a grim determination as Terence MacSwinnny and Jatin Das did, for he is the last person in the world to play the game of bluff. It will be nothing short of second crucifixion and that once again on the soil of Asia. Not only India, but the whole world

\* From a speech delivered at Calcutta.

will be staggered at his vicarious sacrifice for the sake of preventing disruption and vivisection of the Hindu society. We are under an acid test. Mahatmaji has resolved to lay down his life for the removal of untouchability and for the unity and solidarity of the Hindu community. If the vast humanity assembled here today take the vow to remove untouchability by throwing open temples to the Depressed Classes and removing the other disabilities under which they are suffering, Mahatmaji's fast will not be in vain.

## RIGHT IN HIS RESOLVE

BY BABU RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE

FROM THE day that Mahatma Gandhi took up the cause of Indian freedom and national solidarity, including the solidarity of the Hindus, he has been ready to literally lay down his life for it at a moment's notice or even without notice. For people who have not staked their life and all for this cause, as he has done, it must be very difficult to pronounce any opinion on the very serious resolve which he has taken. He has never indulged in bluff. And he has a will of steel. So unless the British Government does what he wants, his resolve will lead to his death. I shrink from the thought of what such self-immolation may lead to. But of one thing I am sure. Such martyrdom will bring about that Hindu, and possibly that Indian, solidarity in the way of which the so-called award stands. So, whatever the British Government may do, Mahatma Gandhi's object will be gained. I humbly think that the Mahatma is right in his resolve.

\* A statement to the press, September 12.

## A CALL FOR SELF-DENIAL

By K. BHASHYAM IYENGAR

WHAT SHALL we do at this time of test and trial when our hearts are touched and our conscience is awakened? What is our duty when Mahatmaji fasts, perhaps unto death? We shall not have feasts or festivals in our houses nor shall we indulge in any personal pleasures. No cinema, no theatres, no music parties or *Harikathas* for us during the period. We shall resolve each in our own way on some measure of sacrifice or act of self-denial. We shall render help to further the cause which Mahatmaji has so much at heart. We shall undertake to remove the disabilities from which the Depressed Classes suffer. We shall form ourselves into a League of Service for the purpose of destroying this blot on Hindu society. Would it not be a small act of atonement if we could collect a large fund to be devoted to the service of this unfortunate section of Hindu society? Such an act will strike the imagination of all and bring the communities together in such a way that they will march together arm in arm to achieve the goal of Swaraj. The *prayashchittam*, belated and inadequate, can hardly make up for centuries of indifference and neglect. I am publishing these thoughts with a view to some concerted action being taken on the above or similar lines.

## THE WEEK'S PROGRAMME

[Sjts. T. Prakasam, K. Nageshwara Rao, K. Bhashyam, T. V. Kalyanasundaram Mudliar, N. S. Varadachari, B. Jagannathadas, Mrs. Lakshmipathi and several other leaders of Madras, made the following appeal to the public on the eve of Gandhiji's fast.]

THE FATEFUL 20th is near at hand. Mahatma Gandhi commences his 'fast unto death' in the cause of the down-trodden. The entire country is deeply stirred by the decision, and besides the feeling of universal sorrow which appears everywhere, there is a searching of hearts and a genuine desire to avert the threatened catastrophe. It is not too much to hope that a way out may be found still which will save Mahatmaji and bring about a reversal of the policy of the British Government in regard to the electoral machinery devised for the representation of the so-called Depressed Classes. The mobilization of public opinion in the direction in which it is wanted is fast coming about, and to help in the process of self-purification, we appeal to all to observe an attitude of fervent prayer from now, and in keeping with the solemnity of Mahatmaji's decision, take a vow of self-denial during the period of the fast. Towards this end we suggest that the following may be adopted :

- (1) Observe a complete fast on the 20th.
- (2) Stop all festivities, visits to theatres and cinemas.
- (3) A postponement of all the programmes of games and sporting matches.
- (4) Stop attendance at Radio.
- (5) All residents living in their own houses to avoid eating-houses and refreshment stalls.
- (6) Carrying on of ceaseless propaganda to help the removal of disabilities of the so-called Depressed Classes.

## LIBERATE THE SUPPRESSED

By SHRIMATI BASANTI DEVI DAS

I REMEMBER with pride and joy how my revered husband valued this work for the freedom of the Suppressed Classes.

\* A Public Appeal issued on September 24th.



He often used to say that this work was the foremost work for the country and that he would, at the very first opportunity, give up political work and plunge himself into this work of liberation of the Suppressed Classes, and that if he was not vouchsafed such an opportunity, he would like to be reborn a 'Chandal', so that he might carry on the work from within. Bengal has already responded. Our Poet Rabindranath has spoken in his own inimitable way. The Kalighat Temple has already been thrown open to the Suppressed Classes. Maharaja Sasikanta Acharya and the Raja of Nashipore have already opened the gates of their private temples to the Suppressed Classes. There have been fraternizing interdinners and interdrinking of water between Caste Hindus and the Suppressed Classes. There have been meetings and demonstrations all over Bengal. Young men have responded to the call. There is not a home in Bengal which has not been stirred to its depths by this mighty upheaval. The Suppressed Classes have already felt the thrill of their liberation. They have already declared their faith and trust in Mahatma Gandhi. But all this is not enough. Much more is wanted. Untouchability must be removed altogether from Bengal for all time to come. It must be made a thing of the past.

If you believe in freedom, resolve today to do away for ever with untouchability and any form of inferiority of the Suppressed Classes. The day fixed for the great work of liberation and rejoicing in Bengal is Mahashtami day, 7th October. On that day, before the Almighty Goddess Durga, will assemble all classes of Hindus of the locality, without distinction, without difference, without any discrimination whatsoever, to take the vow that all Hindus of whatever caste, class or denomination, are equal and that the Suppressed Classes will have equal rights with Caste Hindus in all public and private places of worship and in all public and private affairs.

I am urgently called away to the bedside of Mahatma Gandhi at Yeravda jail, Poona. I entrust the execution of the above programme of work to the students and young men of Bengal in the towns and villages. I have great faith in them. I expect them to organize all pooja-houses in all villages and towns of Bengal for carrying it out.

### A PLEDGE TO THE DEPRESSED CLASSES

[ *The following appeal to the Depressed Classes was issued by the Hindu women of Bombay on September 17* ]

WE, THE WOMEN of India, appeal to our brethern of the so-called Depressed Classes to join us in this crisis and help to save Mahatma's life and the country's future. We know you have suffered much, endured for centuries, because of the social disabilities imposed on you. We are resolved you shall suffer so no more. We know, and you know, and the whole world knows, that Mahatma Gandhi is the one Hindu leader who has dedicated his life to removing this blot from Hindu society. We believe that the conscience of the community has at last awakened to the wrongs of the Depressed Classes. We are convinced that there is a strong feeling, in a large and growing number of the Hindus, that these disabilities shall not continue a day longer. On this we pledge ourselves to do our utmost to have your disabilities—this blot on the Hindu name—eradicated in the shortest possible time.

We appeal to you in no spirit of grudging concession, but in frank comradeship of those who have themselves suffered. We offer you no empty phrases, but our solemn pledge to fight your battle against all to secure you full and equal citizenship.

Of our own accord, we the women signatories of this pledge from the so-called higher Hindu castes and other sister communities pledge ourselves to secure for you perfect equality in regard to (a) all public temples in the land, (b) all public schools, (c) all public wells, tanks, or other such places of common use. This is only an earnest of our pledge, a symbol of our resolve to have your age-long disabilities removed by every means in our power.

KRISHNAGAURI SETALVAD  
SONABAI JAYAKAR  
SHANTABAI G. SHIVLAL  
SUNDARABAI SIRUR  
ANNAPURNA DESHMUKH  
KAMALA NEHRU  
AVANTIKABAI GOKHALE  
GOSHASP CAPTAIN  
SAKINA B. LURMANI  
NARGIS CAPTAIN  
VIMALAGAURI SETALVAD  
GANGUBAI RAMDAS KHAMJI  
BABIBAI MULJI DAYAL  
SHARADABAI BIRLA  
BENABAI HARIDAS BHATIA  
CHATUR SHAH  
SAKAR SHAH

KALAVANTI B. MOTIVALA  
KANTA KHANDVALA  
NAINSUKE MERCHANT  
URMILA MEHTA  
JAYASHRI RAJI  
MANGALA VAIKUNTH MEHTA  
KAMAKOTI NATARAJAN  
KUSUM DESAI  
SHARADA DESAI  
NILAM DESAI  
RATANBEEN MEHTA  
SAFIA JABIRALI  
HANIFEE M. FATEHALI  
SHAMIMA B. LURMANI  
PANNA DAPHTARI  
NIVEDITA MEHTA

## OUR DISABILITIES MUST GO

By B. J. DEORUKHKAR

THE ISSUE before the nation is not whether the so-called untouchables should get a few seats through separate electorates or by reservation in the legislatures of the future

\* Statement issued to the press on 18th September.

national government ; but that the disabilities from which the Harijans suffer should be removed immediately, or at least, earnest efforts should be made for the eradication of this evil, which alone can consolidate the Hindu community and help forward the consummation of the Indian Nation in the near future.

I hereby appeal to all Caste Hindus and members of the Depressed Classes to approach the problem with open mind, and come to such conclusions as would meet Gandhiji's pledge and result in his giving up his fast, and thus save him for India and the world. Gandhiji alone of all leaders has identified himself with the down-trodden, and has now staked his precious life in their cause.

I also hereby appeal to my brethren to realize that they are an integral part of the Hindu community and that they can achieve their goal by being within the Hindu fold rather than keeping themselves aloof.

## SETTLE WITHIN 48 HOURS

BY DR. SYED MAHMUD

**T**HE GOVERNMENT have decided, for obvious reasons, that the communal electorate is good for India. It is not the case. Take the case of Bihar. The Depressed Classes organization here vehemently asked for joint electorate through its accredited representative before the Franchise Committee. Yet the Depressed Classes here will get communal representation. Exactly the same is the case of Muslims here. Last year a statement advocating joint electorate was signed

\* A Statement issued to the press on September 13.

by one thousand leading Muslims, but it was of no avail. The Shias are the most influential and educated and well-to-do community in Bihar. They are almost unanimously against the communal electorate, but of course, it does not suit the Government to recognize this fact. Again the Provincial Muslim League and Jamiat-ul-Ulema declared themselves in favour of joint electorate, and last but not the least, the Amar-at-Shariat of Phulbari, the most influential and the only living Muslim organization in the province has thrown its weight against the communal electorate. Yet the Government refuses to acknowledge these facts. Proof or no proof, the Government have given the verdict that the whole body of the Muslims and the Depressed Classes are in favour of the communal electorate. Why not try one province as a test case? I trust the Hindus will rise to the occasion, if there is any tradition of their past greatness left in them, and see that this matter is settled within the next fortyeight hours. No time is to be lost. We cannot afford to trifle with the life of the greatest living man in the whole world in settling with the Depressed Classes.

## THE FINAL EXPOSITION OF NON-VIOLENCE

BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE

A SHADOW is darkening today over India like a shadow cast by an eclipsed sun. The people of a whole country is suffering from a poignant pain of anxiety, the universality of which carries in it a great dignity of consolation. Mahatmaji, who through his life of dedication has made India his own in truth, has commenced his vow of extreme self-sacrifice.

Each country has its own inner geography where her spirit dwells and where physical force can never conquer even an inch of ground. Those rulers who come from outside remain outside the gate, and directly they are called away from the cloud-topping tower of their foreign possessions the stupendous fabric of unreality vanishes in the void. But the great soul, who achieves victory through the power of truth, continues his dominion even when he is physically no longer present. And we all know such achievement belongs to Mahatmaji. The fact that he has staked his life for a further and final realization of his hope fills us with awe and makes us think.

\* The authorized translation of a speech delivered in Bengali at Shantiniketan on 20th September.

AT THIS SOLEMN moment we have a cause for fear. It is our unfortunate habit to reduce the truth that belongs to the inner spirit to signs and observances that are external and, after a cheap welcome, to bid it adieu. Our leaders have requested us to observe fasting for this day, and there is no harm in it. But there is the risk of some unthinking people putting it in the same category with the fasting that Mahatmaji has begun to observe. Nothing can be more disastrous for us than the utter lessening of the value of a heroic expression of truth by paying it the homage of a mere ceremonial expression of feeling by a people emotionally inclined.

The penance which Mahatmaji has taken upon himself is not a ritual but a message to all India and to the world. If we must make that message our own, we should accept it in the right manner through a proper process of realization. The gift of sacrifice has to be received in a spirit of sacrifice.

LET US TRY to understand the meaning of his message. From the beginning of human history there has continued the cleavage between classes, some favoured by circumstances exploiting the weakness of others and building the stronghold of their own pride of superiority upon the humiliation of a large section of the community. Though this practice has been prevalent for long, yet we must assert that it is against the true spirit of man. No civilized society can thrive upon victims whose humanity has been permanently mutilated, whose minds have been compelled to dwell in the dark. Those whom we keep down inevitably drag us down and obstruct our movement in the path of progress; the indignity with which we burden them grows into an intolerable burden to the whole country; we insult our own humanity by insulting Man where he is helpless or where he is not of our own kin.

TODAY THIRRE are thousands in India, confined in prisons indefinitely and without a trial, inhumanly treated, and there can be no doubt that not only they are a heavy  
 Moral Prison burden upon the Government but they permanently lower its dignity. The contemptuous vindictiveness ruthlessly pursued against prisoners, whether political or belonging to other classes, reveals the primitive barbarism lurking in the dark recess of civilization, perpetually burdening it with hard problems and tainting its soul. We, on our part in India, have banished a considerable number of our own people into a narrow enclosure of insult branding them with the sign of permanent degradation. A dungeon does not solely consist of brick and mortar confinement, but setting narrow limits to man's self-respect is a moral prison more cruel for victims than the physical one and more demoralizing for those who encourage it passively or with pious fervour.

THE CONCRETE fact of iniquities between individuals and races cannot be ignored, but to accept it as absolute and utilize  
 Dark Gaps of Dishonour it to deprive men of their human rights and comradeship is a social crime that multiplies fast in its heinousness. We, who imagine ourselves superior to those whom we have tied down to their abasement, are punished by enfeebling them and losing them from us. The weakness engendered by such alienation has been one of the principal causes of defeat in all our historical conflicts. Where numerous divisions have been made among the people by dark gaps of dishonour, the balance is upset and the social structure is over in danger of toppling over. The signs of such trials are not lacking in the western continents where the chasm between wealth and want is widening and is darkly nourishing earthquakes in its depth. The moral channels of communication should never be obstructed if man must be saved from degeneracy or destruction.



MAHATMAJI has repeatedly pointed out the danger of those divisions in our country that are permanent insults to humanity,

The Gift of  
the Fight      but our attention has not been drawn to the  
                         importance of its rectification with the same  
                         force as it has been to the importance of

Khaddar. The social iniquities upon which all our enemies found their principal support have our time-honoured loyalty, making it difficult for us to uproot them. Against that deep-seated moral weakness in our society Mahatmaji has pronounced his ultimatum, and, though it may be our misfortune to lose him in the battlefield, the fight will be passed to everyone of us to be carried on to the final end. It is the gift of the fight which he is going to offer to us, and if we do not know how to accept it humbly and yet with proud determination, if we cheaply dismiss it with some ceremonials to which we are accustomed and allow the noble life to be wasted with its great meaning missed, then our people will passively roll down the slope of degradation to the blankness of utter futility.

IT IS NOT possible for us to realize what effect Mahatmaji's action will have upon the people who govern us, and today it is not the day for us to discuss its political aspects.

West Is  
Stranger to It      Only one thing we must make clear to those  
                         who seem to have our destiny in their hands.

We have observed that the English people are puzzled at the step that Mahatmaji has been compelled to take. They confess that they fail to understand it. I believe that the reason of their failure is mainly owing to the fact that the language of Mahatmaji is fundamentally different from their own. His method of protest is not in accord with the method which they usually follow in cases of grave political crisis. I ask them to remember the terrible days of atrocities that reddened in blood at their door when dismemberment was being forced between Ireland and the rest of Great Britain. Those Englishmen, who imagined it to be disastrous to the integrity of their Empire

did not scruple to kill and be killed, even to tear into shreds the decency of civilized codes of honour. The West is accustomed to such violent outbursts in times of desperation and, therefore, such a procedure did not seem strange to them, though to some of them it must have appeared wrong.

THE DISMEMBERMENT of a large portion of Hindu society is certainly fatal to its wholeness, and when all our appeals are

Message of  
Nonviolence

stubbornly dismissed the reason should not be incomprehensible to other people as to why Mahatmaji is voicing the extreme form of protest on behalf of India. I ask them to imagine what would have happened when the Roman Catholic community of England suffered from a forcible deprivation of its common rights, if some foreign power had come and with efficient benevolence alienated them from the rest of the nation. Very likely the people would like to resort to the method of protest which they consider as honourable in its red fury of violence. In our case the feeling may be similar, though Mahatmaji has made use of its expression which is his\*own. The message of non-violence, so often expressed by him in words and in deeds, finds today its final exposition in a great language which should be easiest to understand.

## POLITICALLY 'UNTOUCHABLES'

BY M. C. RAJAH

NEVER IN the annals of the history of India has the issue of the Depressed Classes assumed importance as it has today, and for this we of the Depressed Classes must be grateful to Mahatma Gandhi. He has told the world, in words which cannot be mistaken, that our regeneration is the fundamental aim of his life. If world conscience cannot be roused even now to the realization of the position of the Depressed Classes, then we can only conclude that all instincts of humanity are dead in the world today. Let me remind the House that ours is an all-India problem and not confined to some provinces as it is in the case of Muslims and Sikhs. I have heard it often repeated that the Muslim claim and the Sikh claim to special consideration is because they are martial races. So have we been in the ancient history of India. If they claim that they have been rulers in this country, so have we been in the ancient time. But, sir, what we claim is that we have in addition been the most law-abiding and loyal citizens even when social laws

\* A speech in the Legislative Assembly on September 13, on the adjournment motion relating to Gandhiji's grim resolve to 'fast unto death'.

degraded us to a position of untouchability. We never took law into our hands, and depended upon the moral conscience of our countrymen being roused to a realization of the grave injustice and inhumanity practised against us.

THE QUESTION before the House is the situation created by Mahatma Gandhi opposing the grant of communal electorates to the Depressed Classes. I am sure there is no Government had Enough Warning honourable member in this House who will not regret that circumstances should have forced such a great personality to take a vow to play on his life, but sir, the correspondence shows that Government had enough warning. If they did not attach full importance to our considered views expressed in our conferences and in the Rajah-Moonje pact I had signed with the president of Hindu Mahasabha, they should have taken at least the grave warning given by Mahatma Gandhi and desisted from the course of creating separate electorates.

Sir, the situation as it confronts us today is as follows :

The British Government have given their communal decision. They declare that it shall hold good for 20 years in respect of the Depressed Classes, unless there is unanimous request made before the constitution is framed or ten years after the constitution has worked. I wonder what is meant by unanimous request? Has in the political history of any country such literal unanimity ever been attained on any issue? Is the British Government sure that Britishers are unanimous in giving India a further measure of responsibility? Is even the National Government sure that Conservatives as a whole back its Indian policy? This condition of unanimity is thus a dodge to keep us perpetually divided. I claim that my community is already in favour of common electorates, and I will prove my contention by a few quotations.

YOU ALL KNOW that British Government sent two delegates to represent the Depressed Classes at the Round Table Conference,

A Record of Inconsistencies *viz.*, Dr. Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur Srinivasan. Dr. Ambedkar presented the case of

the Depressed Classes in Bombay before the Simon Commission and he presented a statement of his Sabha where he pleaded for joint electorates. As regards Rao Bahadur Srinivasan, when he appeared before the Simon Commission in Madras, to a question put by a member of the Commission, whether he wanted separate electorates for the Depressed Classes, he said, "Not at present," and his reasons were: "our people are not yet advanced to have separate electorates. Unless you give adult franchise, the Depressed Classes should have no separate electorates." This was in 1929. When he went to the first R. T. C., the Depressed Classes' Federation of Madras, of which he is the president, passed a resolution supporting joint electorates and giving him that mandate for being placed before the R. T. C.

In this connection let me tell the House that even Dr. Ambedkar demanded joint electorates with reservation of seats at the first Round Table Conference. When the Indian Central Committee's report was published giving the Depressed Classes joint electorates with reservation for all provinces except Madras, there was no hue and cry, and when the Simon Commission report embodying electorates with reservation of seats was published there was no protest raised against it. My friend, Dr. Ambedkar, while speaking on the recommendations of this Commission, welcomed this system as an advancement in the interest of the community and raised objection to the system of panel from which the Governor was to select candidates for Depressed Classes. Indeed, Dr. Ambedkar speaking at Kamptee conference in 1930 declared, "No share of political powers can come to you so long as the British Government remains where it is. It is only in a Swaraj constitution that you stand any chance of getting political power in your hands." He said in the same

speech, "Swaraj is going to be a system of government in which you (Depressed Classes) stand a chance, other things being equal, of being amongst those who will be installed as political sovereigns of this country."

I DO NOT KNOW what brought about the revolution in the state of mind of Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Srinivasan at the second Round Table Conference when they sacrificed Segregation Undesirable the system whereby they would have obtained the right to be political sovereigns, and secured instead the expression of minimum voice for the people who deserved the maximum electoral power to direct the government from within. Now, sir, it will be clear to the House that joint electorates were acceptable to my community from the time they understood that there was to be a transfer of power to Indian hands. The position we took was that under the scheme of government in which Indians would rule, our safety lay not in finding channels for voicing our opinions, but in taking our due share in the governing of the country. Indeed this is my chief attack on the Premier's letter to Mahatma Gandhi. He tells us that he has given separate electorates for twenty years to enable us to get the minimum number of seats to place our views before the Government and legislature of the day. I contend that this privilege we have already enjoyed under the Montford reforms which have enabled us to get representation in numerous local bodies and in legislatures both provincial and central. We are sufficiently organized for that purpose and do not need either special pleading or special succour. In future what we do need as real remedy for our uplift is definite power to elect our representatives from the general constituencies and hold them responsible to us for their actions. I do not know why the Prime Minister calls the scheme of joint electorates with reservation of seats as impracticable. It is already in force in local bodies in Madras and some other provinces and has worked very

satisfactorily. I contend, sir, that the scheme enunciated in the communal decision involves our segregation and makes us politically untouchables. I am surprised at the argument of the Prime Minister that there is no segregation because we can vote for Caste Hindus who will have to solicit our votes. But, sir, how can we bring about a common ideal of citizenship when Depressed Class representatives are not to solicit votes of higher castes ?

THERE IS, sir, another tragic controversy. When we claim special protection from Government for some share in official services which is given by the Government of India to other minorities and backward classes, we are told that we are classed as Hindus and have no special claim, and when we declare that in the matter of legislative representation we would like to join the general body of Hindus, we are told that we are a separate community. The sufferings which my community has undergone at the hands of Caste Hindus have been acknowledged by Caste Hindus themselves, and I am prepared to admit that there are a large number of reformers among them who are doing everything possible to improve our status and position. I am convinced that there is a change of heart and a change in the angle of vision of Caste Hindus. We, Depressed Classes, feel ourselves as true Hindus as any Caste Hindu can be, and we feel that the moral conscience of the Hindus has been roused to the extent that our salvation lies in bringing about a change from within the main body of Hindu society and not segregating ourselves from them. The course adopted by the Government would certainly arrest the progress of this most laudable movement. I must say, sir, that the Prime Minister's letter in its entire conception and expression has disappointed me. He argues, for instance, that reservation of seats under joint electorates would not be genuine representation for us. Does the Prime Minister know that the Simon Commission, consist-

ing of seven chosen Britishers, held after a most thorough investigation on the spot that such system would produce genuine representation for us? Even the fear expressed by the Prime Minister is resolved by Mahatma Gandhi, who has said that he is ready to enrol every adult member of the Depressed Class as a voter and impose stricter test on Caste Hindus. May I ask why the Premier is not prepared to consider this solution?

NOW LET ME summarize the position. The Premier's award of separate electorates is solely to secure a minimum number of spokesmen for the Depressed Classes. Mahatma Gandhi's decision is for over-representation of the Depressed Classes. In joint electorate my pact with Dr. Moonje of the Hindu Mahasabha gives my community reservation of seats on a population basis. In conclusion, let me add that I have known and studied the question of the Depressed Classes in all its bearings all over India, during the quarter of a century of my public life. I was privileged to review it fully during our tour with the Simon Commission. I would, therefore, ask the Government to take this assurance from me that our best interests require that we should not be dissected from the Hindu community but that we should have our due representation in legislatures on the basis of reservation. The crisis that faces us today is very grave. There hangs in the balance the life of the greatest Indian of our time, and there hangs in the balance the future of millions of the down-trodden people of this country. Is Government going to take the responsibility for killing the one and reducing the other to perpetual servitude? Let it make its choice well and wisely. \*





PART VIII  
THROUGH FOREIGN EYES



## LIGHT OF INDIA

SINCE MAHATMA GANDHI began his 'fast unto death' in the jail yard at Yeravda Prison in India last week, the outside world has been treated to another illustration of the power of his doctrine of non-violent coercion. And this has occurred in a way so striking and vivid that it has begun to produce a curious effect on the views expressed by onlookers from the West.

Interest has grown during the week. Yet it is no longer the interest it was. There is something of wonder in it now, and more of frankly avowed astonishment. While the vast contest represented by the revolt of India against British rule has been waged, these past several years, the contending masses of thought represented by that struggle have held attention variously as the conflict ebbed and flowed. Gandhi, as the leader of the rebel cause, became a world figure.

In this latest contest, however, what onlookers from without have seen has been something more akin to a Greek drama. That ancient theme, 'One against the world', has been incarnated at Poona. The resolution and spiritual authority of a frail old man have challenged not only the British Government; they have challenged with equal force some 200,000,000 or more Hindus in India. Gandhi has demanded of the ancient castes, which divide that ancient Indian race, that there shall be no political ostracism of the 70,000,000 'untouchables' in any

\* *Boston Daily Globe*, Boston, September 26, 1932.

## THE POONA AGREEMENT

LAST WEEK witnessed the achievement of a reconciliation within the Hindu community which time may show to have been the greatest feat in Mahatma Gandhi's career and the most important event that has occurred in the history of Hinduism for centuries. At noon on Tuesday, September 20, Mr. Gandhi began the 'fast till death' which he had announced his intention to make unless the British Government's Communal Award was rescinded in so far as it assigned special electoral constituencies to the Depressed Classes of the Hindu community. Now the British Government rightly felt that it ought not to deprive the Depressed Classes of the constitutional safeguards provided for them in the Award except in exchange for some alternative settlement freely negotiated, on an equal footing, between the representatives of the Depressed Classes themselves and the leaders of the Caste Hindus. In these circumstances, Mr. Gandhi's decision seemed like an act of perversity which was likely to have a tragic ending. It seemed perverse because, to non-Indian eyes, the arrangements made in the British Award for the protection of the Depressed Classes seemed the soundest point in the whole settlement—arrangements which must be even less open

\* The *Economist*, London, October 1, 1932.

to criticism than the arrangements for the protection to the Muslims and Sikhs and other Minorities, inasmuch as the Depressed Classes were more at the mercy of the Hindus than any of these, and were also subject to almost intolerable social conditions already. When Mr. Gandhi declared that he was doing what he was doing for the sake of the Depressed Classes in particular, as well as for Hinduism as a whole, no one doubted his sincerity; yet, to any non-Hindu, his position must have seemed a paradox. How could Mr. Gandhi be helping the Depressed Classes by opposing the British Government's efforts to protect them? And how could he maintain that it would be a misfortune for the Depressed Classes to have their separation from the Caste Hindus expressed in constitutional terms, considering that this separation was a hard fact, centuries old, which was of the Caste Hindus' own doing? As non-Hindu observers watched Mr. Gandhi take his stand, they had to confess that they could not follow the workings of the Hindu mind. Yet the *dénouement* has shown that Mr. Gandhi knew what he was about. So far from the fast ending tragically, it has produced an agreement between the two sections of the Hindu community which is undoubtedly far better, not only for Hinduism as a whole but also for the Depressed Classes in particular, than the Award which the British Government had been constrained to make in the absence of agreement between the two parties directly interested.

The sequence of events was rapid and dramatic. The *impasse* created by Mr. Gandhi's decision to fast to death, combined with the unwillingness of the British Government to rescind their Award except in exchange for a satisfactory agreed settlement, promptly stimulated the leaders of the Caste Hindus to make a revolutionary change of attitude and policy towards the Depressed Classes—a change which, until the other day, would have seemed quite beyond the range of practical politics. Earnest and strenuous negotiations were started; and by last Saturday—the fifth day of the fast—an agreement had been

reached under which the Depressed Classes are to forego their separate electorates and content themselves solely with the general Hindu electorates (in which, of course, they were already included, as well, by the terms of the British Award)—subject to important safeguards which the Caste Hindus are to concede to them. In the first place, they are to have specific number of reserved seats among those assigned by the British Award to the Hindu community in the various Legislatures. In the second place, they are to elect, by themselves, four candidates for each reserved seat—the Hindu general electorate being confined, in its subsequent choice, to one of these four. The settlement as a whole is to last until altered by common agreement. The Depressed Classes' primary elections are to last for a maximum period of ten years.

This Poona Agreement has been accepted by the British Government in lieu of the relevant parts of its Award—subject to reservation of judgment on points in the Poona Agreement that fall outside the scope of the Award. Upon receipt of a telegram from the Prime Minister conveying the Government's decision, Mr. Gandhi broke his fast on Monday. And thus Mr. Gandhi has removed an obstacle in the path of India's progress towards self-government that had loomed as large as any mountain. Nor is this all. For the political agreement between Caste Hindus and 'untouchables', which Mr. Gandhi has brought about, has evoked a movement among the Caste Hindus for abolishing the social disabilities upon the 'untouchables' out of which the whole political problem arises. If this further movement gathers momentum, it may have an almost magic effect in reforming Hindu practice and rejuvenating the Hindu spirit. This is the Indian way of doing great deeds, and it certainly seems very un-western. Let us imagine, for instance, that the present Democratic candidate for the American Presidency, Mr. Franklin Roosevelt, were to announce his intention of fasting to death unless the Southern Democrats abolished 'Jim Crow

Cars' and allowed their coloured fellow-citizens a genuine exercise of the vote. In that event, Mr. Roosevelt would be a doomed man. He would just starve—and no inter-colour convention would meet in the South and make a sensational agreement in order to prevent the tragedy from being enacted to the bitter end.

To find parallels in our Western history one must go back very far indeed. But in the 5th century of our era there actually was a Stylite saint who threatened to come off his pillar (a sacrifice of holiness which was felt to be worse than death itself) unless the Emperor renounced heresy. The Emperor, being a Roman and an Occidental, waited for the saint to come before he gave in. But when Daniel the Stylite really did come down and hobbled into the Imperial presence, the whole of Christendom was so deeply stirred that the Emperor had to conform in a hurry under imminent peril of losing throne and life. That long-lost atmosphere of Christendom is still the atmosphere of Hinduism today, as Mahatma Gandhi's achievement shows us. But the rôle which Daniel the Stylite had to play was straightforward. He had to deal with one man—albeit an Emperor. Mr. Gandhi, on the other hand, has to deal with a great democracy in the West and with all the complexities of a nascent democracy in the East—complexities so great that he may be pardoned if he wishes sometimes to retire to the Stylite pillar and stand aloof from the turmoil of politics.



## CHALLENGE OF SELF-IMMOLATION

BY MR. GANDHI'S threat of self-immolation the slow, impersonal misery of the Indian struggle has been lifted to the level of imminent tragedy. The one member of the human race who is today regarded by millions of people as a saint has declared that he will sacrifice his life as a protest against one of the British Government's decisions. It needs but a slight exercise of the imagination to foresee the fevered days of passion through which India will pass if and when Mr. Gandhi's fast begins. Many thousands of men will cease work and await, day after day, the crisis of the sacrifice, knit together by a single apprehension, a unanimous resentment. They will be moved partly by the usual human feelings which would stir us in such a case, but also by a mystical sense that a cosmic drama is being enacted before their eyes, a struggle between spirit and matter incarnated in this frail saint and his adversary, the Empire. Imagine a believing, medieval world on its knees round Calvary, and a crucifixion lengthening into days or weeks, and one may form some idea of the experience through which this intensely emotional people will pass. If it ends in death will not the last chance of reconciliation with Pilate be gone? Will not 'the martyr' always stand between us and them? No one will remember the

*\*New Statesman and Nation, London.*

nicely balanced pros and cons of this dispute over the 'untouchables'. On the merits of the decision Mr. Gandhi may not today represent the majority of Indian opinion. But India will remember only the broad fact that her saint performed the final rite of Satyagraha, that he gave his life in passive protest against the Empire.

WITH THIS OFFICIAL correspondence before us, we may easily make the mistake of considering this affair too narrowly.

By Will Power      It is the culmination of a long campaign in which Mr. Gandhi conceived himself to be pitting spiritual power against brute force. Sacrifice was his tactic, and it rose by a gradual crescendo. First his followers courted prison by making contraband salt, next they faced the lathis of the police; then they risked their lands by withholding taxes; now at last their leader offers life itself. It is his last throw. If it fails then India will take to violence. This method, it may be, is no more rational than violence. It is an attempt by will-power to coerce others to act against their better judgment. It is formidable only because nearly all Hindus, many Moslems and a great part of the civilized world outside our island venerate this man as few other human beings have ever been venerated. No argument, however trim, over the constitutional merits of the dispute that is the occasion of this sacrifice will help us when we face the Indian people. Memory simplifies.

We are not disposed to argue at length upon the merits of this dispute. An institution so abominable as this system of untouchability, which condemns forty millions of Indians to life-long hereditary degradation, admits of no good solution when one tries to adjust it to a more or less democratic constitution. For our own part we would prefer the expedient of reserved seats. If the 'untouchables' are segregated in a special communal electorate, then their isolation is legalized and made permanent. If, on the other hand, they are swamped in the

general Hindu electorate, they must depend on the goodwill of the superior castes in general, and of the Congress in particular, for any representation at all. They are a numerous but scattered minority illiterate, in most places unorganizable, and so abysmally poor that relatively few of them will qualify by any test of property. Mr. MacDonald's ingenious compromise does both these things and cannot, therefore, altogether avoid the objections to which each course is open. It doubtless is in Mr. Gandhi's mind that Congress, if these outcasts remain wholly within the Hindu electorate, will shepherd them, and place a number of their candidates on its lists. But in Mr. MacDonald's separated electorate the militant movement led by Dr. Ambedkar will have its chance, and may create a furious anti-Hindu party, which will combine with the Moslems and the smaller minorities to break the nationalist movement and support the Imperial Power. Mr. Gandhi presumably realizes that British Government cannot withdraw its settlement at his demand. He may hope that Indians may now themselves make it superfluous by coming together to comprise an agreed settlement while he fasts. That, given the pressure of Indian public opinion, is not an impossible miracle. No Indian minority will wish to share the guilt of the national hero's death. The Indian Government, if it can in any way promote such a settlement, ought for its own sake to smooth the way.

FAILING THIS precarious change, the responsibility of averting this tragedy must largely rest with Mr. MacDonald.

India's Voice      It is not enough that he devised a solution which doubtless seemed to him good. Form of Mr. Gandhi what conception you please: condemn his act by any cold scientific word that comes handy: the fact remains that it will have its historical consequences. The least of them will be to wreck whatever chance there was that India will ever consent

to work Sir Samuel Hoare's constitution. It has been, in our view, wasted labour ever since he interned Mr. Gandhi, set out to crush Congress and drove even the Liberals into opposition. If India's resistance should be sealed by her leader's death this chapter is finally closed. There is no escape within the four corners of this special issue. It may be said that Mr. Gandhi is not the voice of India: he speaks for a fraction, which some might put at a third, and others more nearly at twice that proportion. But there come electrical moments when one is compelled to realize that this strange man has the genius that can by a dramatic act rally India to himself and give to his voice the resonance of legions. With this voice we must converse while there is still breath in this body.

It will be said that even if the dangers are as great as we suggest no government can alter its award because one fanatic threatens to commit suicide on the doorstep. But we do not suggest that the Government should climb down on their award. We urge that the moment is ripe for the personal intervention of Mr. MacDonald into the whole tragic muddle in India. Only a personal intervention overriding the accepted forms of official intercourse is likely to move Mr. Gandhi, who will not desire to die if he can see hope of avoiding the internal disruption which he fears. If Mr. MacDonald were now to intervene with a general amnesty in his hand and offer of renewed negotiations there would be a revival of hope such as there was when Lord Irwin moved India by promise of a conference on equal terms. Mr. Gandhi has lifted India's affairs to a plane of tragic emotion. We cannot deal with him, or cope with the consequences of his act, save by stepping ourselves out of the rut of habit.

## GANDHI DEFIES THE EMPIRE

**M**AHATMA GANDHI, whose life has always been at the service of his people, has now definitely placed it with them as a hostage of true freedom. Reiterating his well-known belief that the proposed constitutional change which provides for separate representation of the Depressed Classes will merely end up by stamping upon them a label of inferiority and will tend to perpetuate their status, he promises to starve himself to death, whether or not he is released, unless the official arrangement is changed. This is non-violent struggle at its apex, to the simple dramatic thrill of which we should like to yield ourselves were it not for the grim tragedy involved.

With characteristic moderation, humility and candour, the belated news reveals, Mr. Gandhi has been corresponding with the Prime Minister in an effort to persuade him toward reconsideration; but the latter-day Ramsay MacDonald has responded, so it seems, with nothing beyond the usual reassurances. It is known not only to Mr. Gandhi, but to students of the Round Table proceedings, that in reality Mr. MacDonald holds for the Indian leader violent animosity, and we cannot anticipate very much of a relaxation in stubbornness on the part of the Premier.

\* *World Tomorrow*, New York.

That new life will be given to the pro-Gandhi movement all around the world, especially in England itself, is certain. Its followers know that Mr. Gandhi is no histrionic fakir, but an enlightened and aroused man, conscious of his vast responsibility and moving with deadly precision toward his goal.

Unquestionably, this new defiance of British authority will cement together a great many dissident elements within India itself. Before the latest development Britain's decision to take away responsibility for a settlement from the Round Table Committee and turn it over to Parliament has alienated almost the last moderate opinion in India. Whether Mr. Gandhi's fast can draw into line this minority of articulate 'untouchables', who have rallied behind the leadership of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who at the Round Table Conference argued for separate electorates, no one can yet say.

For our own part, having discussed this face to face with Dr. Ambedkar and having heard Mr. Gandhi set forth his views in London, we are stoutly convinced, though not in a spirit of blind Gandhi worship, that reason and truth are with the Mahatma. Instead of citizens voting as citizens, under the proposed plan Moslems will vote as Moslems, Hindus as Hindus, women as women, and in certain sections 'untouchables' as 'untouchables'.

It would be difficult to devise a procedure better calculated to intensify the bitterness of religious and caste controversies than to base political institutions upon these cleavages. Even the reactionary Simon Commission Report condemned separate electorates, as did also two different commissions in Ceylon. Mahatma Gandhi, speaking in behalf of the Indian National Congress, has said repeatedly with the utmost emphasis that he will never consent to separate electorates. Hindus, Moslems and Sikhs alike are raising a storm of protest against the communal award.

Fifty thousand political prisoners are behind the bars and it is likely that the number of non-co-operators imprisoned will rapidly increase. Two years more of repression and police barbarity and the last vestige of British prestige in India will have vanished.

## MAHATMA GANDHI WINS

THE SUCCESS OF Mahatma Gandhi's hunger strike in India takes immediate rank among the most important events of the year. Ostensibly directed against the British Government which had imposed on the country a political arrangement for the relief of the 'untouchables', a matter on which the Hindus had been unable to agree, an arrangement which seemed quite as likely to inflame public sentiment even as the bestowal of the franchise on the freed but ignorant blacks in this country immediately after the Civil War outraged the whites, his self-imposed fast was really an appeal to the consciences of his countrymen of all castes, and its success probably means the settlement by the Hindus themselves of the greatest of the issues which have divided India against itself. If this issue can be settled amicably, the differences between the Hindus and Moslems should also yield to the gentle persuasion of 'sweet reasonableness.'

The 'untouchables', heretofore firm in their demand for political guarantees which Britain sought to give them in a separate electorate, have agreed to throw in their lot with the higher Caste Hindus, who in turn have given assurance that they

\* *Commerce and Finance*, New York.



will take practical steps toward lifting the 'untouchables' from their degraded social position. Mr. Gandhi is satisfied with this arrangement, convinced that his compatriots will carry it out in good faith, and the British Government has accepted it.

Mr. Gandhi, now 63 years of age, on Monday broke his fast of 6 days 5 hours. He has not stood the strain as well as in his former fasts, in one of which he took no nourishment for 21 days. It was his visible physical weakening and the concern expressed by his physician which hastened the agreement, no faction in India desiring to be held responsible by public opinion for his possible death. None doubted that he would indeed fast unto death if no agreement was reached and the British Government persisted in settling the dispute in its own way.

"If I am wrong in my contention," he had said calmly, "my passing will remove an obstacle to the proper settlement of the issue." The *dénouement* seems to indicate that his self-immolation has done more to arouse the Indian sense of justice to the oppressed than any amount of discussion around the 'round table' could have done.

## BRITAIN ON TRIAL

BY THE TIME these lines are read, Mahatma Gandhi will presumably have started upon his fast ; and in view of his frail health it is most unlikely that he can survive for six or eight weeks, as can a normally strong adult. It is all very well to say that he is not acting as a sensible politician but as a religious fanatic : if he were not a religious fanatic he would never have attained the position he holds in the hearts of millions of his fellow countrymen. The point which caused him to undertake his hunger strike may seem a minor one in view of the whole situation in India : he wants complete political equality for the 'untouchables', with neither over nor under representation in the Indian parliament. His attitude has been misrepresented in some American newspapers as one of hostility to the 'untouchables', but it is not. His statesmanship in taking this position is unquestionably sounder than that of the British, who only a few years ago introduced into India for the first time the racial basis. If he chooses to lay down his life for this principle, it ill behoves any English or American commentator, sitting comfortably at home, to criticize him for it. His death will undoubtedly let loose a flame which will run through all India. No

\* *New Republic*, New York.

British statesman ever faced a greater opportunity to rise supremely to a great test, to cut through red tape and make a magnificent stroke for humanity, than does Ramsay Macdonald at this moment. We wish we could believe that he has the wisdom and courage.

APPENDIX I  
INAUGURATING THE NEW ERA



*[ No account of Gandhiji's epic fast can be complete without a detailed summing up of the remarkable work of reform achieved during the 'fortnight of agony' between 12th and 26th September and the succeeding week. The following digest of these activities has been prepared by a friend. ]*

AS SOON as Gandhiji's resolve to 'fast unto death' became known, the Hindu leaders issued appeals requesting the people to remove untouchability root and branch. Pandit Malaviya proposed to convene a conference at Delhi on September 14. But on Mr. Jayakar's suggestion, the conference was shifted to Bombay so as to be nearer to Gandhiji. Sjt C. Rajagopalachari issued statements asking people to observe 20th September as a day of prayer, penance and fast.

A meeting of the Delhi citizens was held inside the Daya-shankar temple when a large number of Depressed Class members attended. On September 14, all the Allahabad temples were thrown open. On the 16th September the Kalighat temple of Calcutta was thrown open to Harijans. The Depressed Classes of Ahmedabad decided to fast on September 20 along with Gandhiji. The students of Bombay made a move to work among the 'untouchables' to remove every disability imposed on them and also hawk Khaddar for three days. Sjt. Kelappan, a well-known social worker of Kerala who was doing uplift work in Guruvayur began a fast as a protest against the temple authorities who would not open the temple to the

'untouchables'. A ballot taken at seven prominent temples in Bombay resulted in 24,797 persons voting in favour of temple-entry for the Harijans, while only 448 voted against. The following are the details of the ballots held at different temples :

		<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>
Ram Mandir, Thakurdwar ...	...	3,531	265
Madhavbag ...	...	10,622	41
Narnarayan Mandir ...	...	3,060	40
Babulnath ...	...	525	2
Mumbadevi Mandir ...	...	1,718	12
Rama Mandir, Bhuleshwar ...	...	5,051	80
Radhakrishna Mandir, Bhuleshwar		290	5
Total		<u>24,797</u>	<u>445</u>

The Vithoba Rukmini temple of Bombay was thrown open to 'untouchables'. Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah with some of his comrades attended the 'pooja'. Dr. Rabindranath Tagore explained to his students the significance of Gandhiji's fast, and asked them to spread Gandhiji's message in the neighbouring villages. At Gauhati all the temples were opened to Harijans. On the same day, an influential appeal was made by Nagpur college students to wipe off untouchability. In many jails the prisoners offered prayers for the successful termination of Gandhiji's fast. Some of the Hindu leaders of Simla did scavenging work to show that they were one with the 'untouchables'. In Nagpur an important and ancient temple was opened to the Harijans. Later in the day, they drew water from public wells. On September 20, there was a procession of Delhi citizens. The processionists on reaching the Jumna bank offered prayers for Gandhiji's success. After Satyagraha on the part of the students at the temple gates, the Jasraj Mandir of Karachi, was opened to Harijans. In Madras the ancient and the most orthodox of the temples, the

Kandaswamy temple was opened to Harijans. Several Gandhi processions were taken out in the South. At Poona the doors of the Parvati temple were flung open spontaneously to Harijans and Sjt. Rajabhoj who two and a half years ago had led Satyagraha, but without success, for the admission of Harijans into that temple, was the first to enter. In Bombay again, a century old temple at Thakurdwar and an eighty year old Sindhi temple were opened to the 'untouchables'. What social reformers could not do for two decades was thus achieved in a twinkling of the eye by Gandhiji's Fast. Temple after temple was opened after the Yeravda Pact was signed. Particularly all the temples at Patna, Lyallpur, Beawar, Rajbari, Cuttack and other places were flung open. Inter-caste dinners were held at various places including Bombay, Delhi, Patna and Nagpur. The people also commemorated the signing of the Pact by striking purchases of Khadi. 300 students of Nagpur penetrated into the villages of Katol, Bhandara, Gondia, Ramtek and Arvi to spread the significance of Mahatma Gandhi's fast and to ask the villagers to throw open temples and wells to Harijans.

On 26th September, Sjt. Rajagopalachari and Babu Rajendra Prasad appealed to the nation to observe the Gandhi Birthday Celebration week as an 'Untouchability Abolition Week'.

At a mammoth meeting held at Poona on the 27th September under the presidentship of Pandit Malaviya, Dr. Tagore, Sjt. Rajagopalachari, Babu Rajendra Prasad, Mrs. Motilal Nehru and Sjt. Aney paid homage to Gandhiji on the occasion of his 64th birthday, and opened the week with an appeal to the Hindus to remove the 'curse of ages'. In replying to Sir Prabhashanker Pattani's cable asking for information on the real situation in India, the Poet wired: "The whole country is profoundly stirred by Mahatmaji's penance. Sweeping reforms are proceeding. There is every chance of the palpably unjust communal award being rectified by our own people."



Anti-untouchability meetings were held all over the country and resolutions were passed calling upon trustees of Hindu temples to throw open all temples to the Harijans. There was a ready response. Several temples at Amraoti, Kolhapur, Sholapur, and Savantvadi were thrown open to Harijans. The Maharaja of Tripura threw open all the temples in his state to Harijans. Anti-untouchability Leagues were started in different cities. On 28th September an inter-caste dinner was held at Delhi in which several Pandits participated.

Largely attended meetings all over the country ratified the Poona Pact. Wells and temples were thrown open to Harijans at Yeotmal, Amraoti, Nadiad and other places. 'The Gandhi Fast Prevention Committee' of C. P. collaborated with the Anti-untouchability League and started several branches of the Anti-untouchability League in the Central Provinces. High-caste Hindus of Bhandara joined Harijans in a dinner. In the south Sjt. Kellapan, the Kerala leader, who had been fasting since 21st September, suspended his fast for three months on the 2nd October on Gandhiji's advice. Dr. Ambedkar, Pandit Malaviya and other leaders appealed to the Zamorin to throw open the temple. An inter-caste dinner was arranged under the auspices of the Anti-untouchability Committee of the Benares Hindu University when Principal Dhruva, the Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University, along with numerous orthodox Brahmins, dined with sweepers and cobblers.

#### *29th and 30th September*

Sjt. Rajagopalachari and Babu Rajendra Prasād started on a South Indian tour to explain to the people the terms of the Yeravda Pact and to draw the attention of the people to the need for the removal of untouchability. At Madras over sixty prominent people belonging to different schools of political thought attended a dinner held in honour of Rao Bahadur R. Srinivasan

and other delegates of the Madras Depressed Classes Federation to the Bombay Conference. The Municipal Council of Erode passed a resolution that no hotels which refused to serve 'untouchables' should be given licenses. It also resolved to throw open all public wells and roads for Harijans. At a largely attended meeting at Dohad, it was urged that Hindus should take as many 'untouchables' into their households as possible and thus work for the removal of untouchability. Three temples at Bodgaon, Surgaon and Selsura were thrown open to the Harijans. At Lahore a lawyer, president of a District Bar Association invited twenty 'untouchables' instead of Brahmans for a 'Shradha' ceremony at his house. The Pathare Kshatriya community of Bombay resolved to throw open the Gamdevi temple to the Harijans. The women of Bombay and Suburbs sent messages to the Maharajas of Travancore and Cochin to give their subjects a lead in removing untouchability in their States. Ahmedabad women also resolved at a meeting to do their bit for the Harijans.

#### *1st October*

Seven thousand Hindus met at the C. J. Hall, Bombay, under the Presidentship of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya when it was resolved to establish an All-India Anti-untouchability League with its head-quarters at Delhi, and branches in different provincial centres, with Sjt. G. D. Birla as President.

#### *2nd October*

Temples were thrown open to Harijans at Saraspur in Ahmedabad. A public meeting was held under the auspices of the Civic Council of Pilibhit when a resolution was passed to allot an additional seat in the Municipality to the 'untouchables' and requesting candidates of other castes to withdraw in favour of the Depressed Classes. Twenty wells and five temples were thrown open to the 'untouchables' in the *tehsil* of Hinganghat. A

century old temple of Rama was declared open at Bandra, a suburb of Bombay to the 'untouchables'. The States of Baroda, Kashmir, Kolhapur and Bhore declared all temples in their States open to the Harijans.

Untouchability abolition activity reached its high water mark on the 1st of November when Dr. Subbarayan's temple entry resolution was carried in the Madras Legislative Council without a single dissentient voice, which showed that the heart of the citadel of orthodoxy in India had at last collapsed.

The resolution stated that the Government should recognize the growing public feeling for the removal of the disabilities of the 'untouchables' in regard to public worship and take advantage of the great impetus given by the Poona Agreement and the consequent agitation that the public places of worship should be thrown open to the 'untouchables'.

The resolution asked the Government to bring forward legislation for removing the doubts and the disabilities of the trustees of temples in regard to the opening of their temples to the 'untouchables'.

*The List of Temples thrown open to the 'untouchables' from the 13th Sept. to 2nd October 1932.*

September	14	Delhi	Dayashankar temple
"	16	Calcutta	Kalighat temple
"	19	Allahabad	Twelve temples *
"	19	Ahmedabad	Goddess temple
"	20	Nagpur	2 temples and 2 wells
"	20	Nainital	One temple
"	20	Patna	Bara Patnandevi and some other temples

September	20	Seoni	Sri Ramchandra temple
"	20	Madras	Kandaswamy temple
"	20	Lucknow	Bani Kabir temple
"	20	Meerut	Kalpantans Shiva Mandir, & 5 other temples
"	20	Jubbulpore	All local temples
"	20	Bassein	A private temple
"	20	Cuttack	Biswanath temple
"	20	Bombay	Vithoba Rukmini temple, Tha- kurdwar, Round, and Kum- bharwada temples
"	21	Karachi	All temples but one
"	21	Nadiad	One temple
"	21	Rajbari	Kali temple
"	21	Jamshedpur	Shree Ram Mandir
"	21	Copergaon	Several temples and wells
"	21	Hyderabad	Shiva temple
"	21	Raipur	Gopinath temple
"	21	Mhow	One temple
"	21	Baroda	Khanderao Mahadev temple
"	21	Saugor	Shree Vithal Mandir, Hanu- man temple and others
"	21	Vani	One temple
"	22	Bombay	Muralidhar temple, Thakur- dwar Dattatreya temple, Hanuman temple
"	22	Bangalore	Mariammakoil, Ganesh temple, Venugopalswamy temple
"	22	Madras	Anjaneya temple
"	22	Poona	Siva temple
"	23	Patna	Temples at Gaya and Navada
"	22	Lyallpur	Mahabir Dal temple
"	23	Beawar	Mahabir temple
"	23	Belgaum	Hanuman and Kapalishwar temples

September	23	Nagpur	Nava Shukrawari temple
"	23	Amraoti	Mahadev temple
"	23	Jubbulpore	All local temples
"	24	Sholapur	Siddheswar temple
"	25	Thana	Maruti temple
"	25	Mahad	Vireshwar temple
"	26	Savantvadi	Shri Vithal temple
"	26	Khandwa	Panchayatee Shree temple
"	26	Quilon	Shrikrishna temple
"	26	Bombay	Vithoba Rukmini temple, (Souter Road), and Vithoba Rukmini temple (Reay Road)
"	26	Kandivli	Shiva temple
"	27	Wardha	Rama temple
"	27	Bombay	Nar Narayan temple (Zaver Baug)
"	27	Nadiad	Devi Surajbai temple
"	27	Comilla	All temples in Tripura
"	28	Yeotmal	Two wells
"	28	Amraoti	Nilkantheshwar temple
"	29	Amraoti	Amba Mandir
"	29	Bombay	Gamdevi temple of Kshatriyas
"	29	Wardha	Temples at Borgaon, Surgaon and Selsura
October	1	Wardha	All the important temples
"	1	Ranpur	Kabeer's temple
"	2	Naihat	All temples opened
"	2	Kolhapur	Dutt temple
"	2	Andheri	One temple
"	2	Ahmedabad	Ramji temple

APPENDIX II  
ARROWS OF FIRE



## A CHAPTER OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I REGARD untouchability as the greatest blot on Hinduism. This idea was not brought home to me simply by my bitter experience during the South African struggle. It is not, again, due to the fact that I was once an agnostic. It is equally wrong to think, as some people do, that I have taken my views from my study of Christian religious literature. These views of mine on this subject, date as far back as the time when I was neither enamoured of, nor was acquainted with, the Bible or the followers of the Bible.

I was hardly yet twelve when this idea dawned on me. A scavenger named Uka, an 'untouchable', used to attend our house for cleaning the latrines. Often I would ask my mother why it was wrong to touch him and why I was forbidden to do so. If I accidentally touched Uka I was asked to perform the ablutions; and though I naturally obeyed, it was not without smilingly protesting that untouchability was not sanctioned by religion and that it was impossible that it should be so. I was a very dutiful and obedient child; but so far as was consistent with respect for my parents I often had tussles with them on this matter. I told my mother that she was entirely wrong in considering physical contact with Uka as sinful; it could not be sinful.



While at school I would often happen to touch the 'untouchables'; and, as I never would conceal the fact from my parents, my mother would tell me that the shortest cut to purification, after the unholy touch, was to cancel it by touching any Musalman passing by. Therefore, simply out of reverence and regard for my mother I often did so, but never did so believing it to be a religious obligation.

The Ramayana used to be regularly read in our family. A Brahmin used to read it. He was stricken with leprosy and was confident that a regular reading of the Ramayana would cure him; and indeed he was cured. 'How can the Ramayana', I thought to myself, 'in which one who is regarded nowadays as an 'untouchable' took Rama across the Ganges in his boat, countenance the idea of any human beings being untouchable on the ground that they are polluted souls?'

The fact that we address God as 'the purifier of the polluted' shows that it is a sin to regard anyone born in Hinduism as polluted—that it is Satanic to do so. I have hence been never tired of repeating that it is a great sin. I do not pretend that this thing had crystallized as a conviction in me at the age of twelve, but I do say that I did then regard untouchability as a sin.

I have always claimed to be an orthodox conservative Hindu. It is not that I am quite innocent of the Scriptures. I am not a profound scholar of Sanskrit. I have read the Vedas and the Upanishads only in translation. Naturally, therefore, mine is not a scholarly study of them. My knowledge of them is in no way profound, but I have studied them as a Hindu and I claim to have grasped their true spirit. By the time I had reached the age of twenty-one I had studied other religions also. There was a time when I was wavering between Hinduism and Christianity. When I recovered my balance of mind I felt that to me salvation was possible only through the Hindu

Religion, and my faith in Hinduism grew deeper and more enlightened. But even then I believed that untouchability was not for me.

So long as Hindus wilfully regard untouchability as a part of their religion, so long as the mass of Hindus consider it a sin to touch a section of their brethren, Swaraj is impossible of attainment. But I have faith in me still. I realize that the spirit of kindness whereof the poet Tulsidas sang so eloquently, which forms the corner-stone of the Jain and the Vaishnava religions, which is the quintessence of the Bhagavat and behind every verse in the Gita—this kindness, this love, this charity is slowly but steadily gaining ground in the hearts of the masses of this country.

I was at Nellore on the National Day. I met the 'untouchables' there, and I prayed as I have done today. I *do* want to attain spiritual deliverance. I do *not* want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should wish to be born an 'untouchable', so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings, and the affronts levelled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition. Therefore, I prayed that if I should be born again I should be so, not as a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, or Shudra, but as an 'untouchable'.

I love scavenging. In my Ashram an eighteen-year-old Brahmin lad is doing the scavenger's work, in order to teach the Ashram scavenger cleanliness. The lad is no reformer. He was born and bred in orthodoxy. He is a regular reader of the Gita and faithfully performs his prayers. When he conducts the prayer his soft, sweet melodies melt one into love. But he felt that his accomplishments were incomplete until he had become also a perfect sweeper. He felt that if he wanted the Ashram sweeper to do his work well he must do it himself and set an example.

You should realize that you are cleaning Hindu society. You have, therefore, to purify your lives. You should cultivate the habits of cleanliness, so that no one may point his finger at

you. Some of you are addicted to habits of drinking and gambling which you must get rid of.

You claim to be Hindus, you read the scriptures ; if, therefore, the Hindus oppress you, you should understand that the fault does not lie in the Hindu religion, but in those who profess it. In order to emancipate yourselves you have to purify yourselves. You have to get rid of evil habits like drinking liquor and eating carrion. I have come in contact with the 'untouchables' all over the country, and I have observed that immense possibilities lie latent in them, whereof neither they nor the rest of the Hindus seem to be aware. Their intellect has a virginal purity. I ask you to learn spinning and weaving ; and if you take this up as a profession you will keep poverty from your doors.

You should now cease to accept leavings from plates, however clean they may be represented to be. Receive grain only—good, sound grain, not rotten grain—and that too only if it is courteously offered. If you are able to do all that I have asked you to do, you will secure your emancipation.

The Hindus are not sinful by nature ; they are sunk in ignorance. Untouchability must be extinct in this very year. Two of the strongest desires that keep me in the flesh are the emancipation of the 'untouchables' and the protection of the cow. When these two desires are fulfilled, there is Swaraj ; and therein lies my own soul's deliverance. May God give you strength to work out your own soul's salvation to the end.

\*A speech at the Depressed Class Conference at Ahmedabad, reported in *Young India*, April 27, 1921.

## THE SIN OF UNTOUCHABILITY

HAS NOT A JUST Nemesis overtaken us for the crime of untouchability? Have we not reaped as we have sown? Have we not practised Dyerism and O'Dwyerism on our own kith and kin? We have segregated the 'Pariah' and we are in turn segregated in the British Colonies. We deny him the use of public wells; we throw the leavings of our plates at him. His very shadow pollutes us. Indeed there is no charge that the 'Pariah' cannot sling in our faces and which we do not sling in the faces of Englishmen.

How is this blot on Hinduism to be removed? 'Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you.' I have often told English officials that, if they are friends and servants of India, they should come down from their pedestal, cease to be patrons, demonstrate by their loving deeds that they are in every respect our friends, and believe us to be equals in the same sense as they believe fellow Englishmen to be their equals. After the experiences of the Punjab and the Khilafat, I have gone a step further and asked them to repent and to change their hearts. Even so it is necessary for us Hindus to repent of the wrong we have done, to alter our behaviour towards those whom we have suppressed. We must not throw a few miserable schools

at them : We must not adopt the air of superiority towards them. We must treat them as our blood brothers as they are in fact. We must return to them the inheritance which we have robbed them of. And this must not be the act of a few English-knowing reformers merely, but it must be a conscious voluntary effort on the part of the masses. We may not wait till eternity for this much belated reformation. We must aim at bringing it about within this year of grace, probation, preparation, and *tapasya*. It is a reform not to follow Swaraj but to precede it.

Untouchability is not a sanction of religion, it is a device of Satan. The devil has always quoted scriptures. But scriptures cannot transcend reason and truth. They are intended to purify reason and illuminate truth. I am not going to burn a spotless horse because the Vedas are reported to have advised, tolerated, or sanctioned the sacrifice. For me the Vedas are divine and unwritten. 'The letter killeth.' It is the spirit that giveth life. And the spirit of the Vedas is purity, truth, innocence, chastity, humility, simplicity, forgiveness, godliness, and all that makes a man or woman noble and brave. 'There is neither nobility nor bravery in treating the great and uncomplaining scavengers of the nation as worse than dogs to be despised and spat upon. Would that God gave us the strength and the wisdom to become voluntary scavengers of the nation as the 'suppressed' classes are forced to be. There are Augean stables enough and to spare for us to clean.

*Young India*, 19th Jan. 1921

## DEPRESSED CLASSES

**VIVEKANAND** used to call the Panchamas 'suppressed classes'. There is no doubt that Vivekanand's is a more accurate adjective. We have suppressed them and have consequently become ourselves suppressed. That we have become the 'Pariahs of the Empire' is, in Gokhale's language, the retributive justice meted out to us by a just God. A correspondent indignantly asks me in a pathetic letter what I am doing for them. Should not we, the Hindus, wash our bloodstained hands before we ask the English to wash theirs? This is a proper question seasonably put. And if I, a member of a slave nation could deliver the suppressed classes from their slavery without freeing myself from my own, I would do so today. But it is an impossible task. A slave has not the freedom even to do the right thing. It is right for me to prohibit the importation of foreign goods, but I have no power to bring it about. It was right for Maulana Mahomed Ali to go to Turkey and to tell the Turks personally that India was with them in their righteous struggle. He was not free to do so. If I had a truly national legislature I would answer Hindu insolence by erecting special and better wells for the exclusive use of the suppressed classes and by erecting better and more numerous schools for them, so that

there would not be a single member of the suppressed classes left without a school to teach his children. But I must wait for that better day.

Meanwhile are the Depressed Classes to be left to their own resources? Nothing of the sort. In my own humble manner I have done and am doing all I can for my Panchama brother.

There are three courses open to these down-trodden members of the nation. In their impatience they may call in the assistance of . . . . . Government. They will get it but they will fall from the frying pan into the fire. . . . . The Musalmans tried it and failed. They found that they were worse off than before. The Sikhs did it unwittingly and failed. Today there is no more discontented community in India than the Sikhs. Government aid is therefore no solution. The second is rejection of Hinduism and wholesale conversion to Islam or Christianity. And if a change of religion could be justified for worldly betterment, I would advise it without hesitation. But religion is a matter of the heart. No physical inconvenience can warrant abandonment of one's own religion. If the inhuman treatment of the Panchamas were a part of Hinduism, its rejection would be a paramount duty both for them and for those like me who would not make a fetish even of religion and condone every evil in its sacred name. But I believe that untouchability is no part of Hinduism. It is rather an excrescence to be removed by every effort. And there is quite an army of Hindu reformers who have set their heart upon ridding Hinduism of this blot. Conversion, therefore, I hold, is no remedy whatsoever.

Then there remains, finally, self-help and self-dependence, with such aid as the non-Panchama Hindus will render of their motion, not as a matter of patronage but as a matter of duty. And herein comes the use of non-co-operation.

By way of protest against Hinduism, the Panchamas can certainly stop all contact and connection with the other Hindus

so long as the special grievances are maintained. But this means organized intelligent effort. And so far as I can see there is no leader among the Panchamas today who can lead them to victory through non-co-operation.

The better way, therefore, perhaps, is for the Panchamas heartily to join the national movement. . . .

*Young India*, October 27th, 1920.



## OUR SHAME

**S**JT. S. D. Nadkarni is a clear writer, and has a very large heart for the so-called untouchables. . . . . I entirely agree with Sjt. Nadkarni, that if there was no Swaraj without Hindu-Muslim unity, much less is there Swaraj without the removal of the shame of Hinduism, which untouchability certainly is. I am unconcerned with the question, what place the 'untouchables' will have in any political constitution that may be drawn up. Every one of the artificial props, that may be set up in the constitution, will be broken to bits, if we Hindus do not wish to play the game. The reasoning I have given against separate electorates and separate treatment in the constitution is equally applicable in the case of the 'untouchables'. This removal of untouchability is not to be brought about by any legal enactment. It will only be brought about when the Hindu conscience is roused to action, and of its own accord *removes* the shame. It is a duty the 'touchables' owe to the 'untouchables'.

"Let them not wait till the Suppressed Classes Leagues and Touchable-Untouchable riots open their eyes to the most needy amongst us Indians." This is a terrible sentence occurring in the concluding portion of the letter. It is impossible to deny the force behind it. It reminds me of the conversation that

took place between the late Sjt. Hari Narayan Apte and myself just before Gokhale died. It was at the Servants of India Society's quarters in Poona that I was pleading for work among the so-called higher classes rather than agitating amongst the suppressed classes after the fashion of some missionaries and creating unrest among them. I was new to the work. I had not drunk deep of the ocean of miseries, in which the suppressed classes were being drowned, as the late Sjt. Hari Narayan Apte had. In my philosophical prudence I asked this reformer, burning with the shame of the wrongs heaped upon the suppressed classes by the suppressing classes, whether he would incite suppressed classes against us. Instantly and indignantly came the reply: "Certainly, if I could, I would make them rebel against us today, and wrest from us by force what we will not give them voluntarily and as a matter of duty."

Much progress has been achieved in the matter of this reform, but infinitely more remains to be done. Most reforms have been preceded by bloodshed. There seems to arrive a point, at which patience of the down-trodden is exhausted, and taking the law into their own hands and maddened with grief and rage, they make short work of the tyrant, and in their turn repeat, on an opportunity occurring, all the mistakes of the tyrant. Though, therefore, I share now to the fullest extent, I hope, the indignation that filled Hari Narayan Apte, I must work in the hope that the so-called higher class Hindus will, whilst there is yet time, retrace their steps, and render to the suppressed classes the justice, which has become long overdue, and, in the further hope that should the former not repent, the suppressed classes will know better than to rise in revolt against the wrong-doers. I must continue to work in the hope that they will vindicate themselves and their Hinduism by going through a process of self-purification and thus prove themselves to be superior Hindus to those who are today disgracing themselves and Hinduism before man and God. Every individual Hindu,

who feels as Sgt. Nadkarni does for the 'untouchables', can meanwhile make common cause with them by himself or herself becoming 'untouchable' by sharing their sorrow and their travails.

*Young India*, June 30, 1927

## THE HYDRA-HEADED MONSTER

A FRIEND has sent me a gist of what appears in the Southern Vernacular press, from the pen of a learned Pandit. He summarizes the Pandit's plea for untouchability in this fashion :

(1) "The fact that once Adishankara asked a *Chandala* to be aloof from him, and the fact that Trishanku when he was condemned to be a *Chandala* was shunned by all people, prove that untouchability is not of recent growth.

(2) "The *Chandalas* are the outcasts of the Aryan society.

(3) "The untouchables themselves are not free from the sin of untouchability.

(4) "The untouchables are so because they kill animals and because they have constantly to do with flesh, blood, bones and night-soil.

(5) "The untouchables must be isolated even as slaughter-houses, toddy-shops and houses of ill-fame are or should be.

(6) "It should be enough that untouchables are not denied the privileges of the other world.

(7) "A Gandhi may touch these people, but so can he fast. We may neither fast nor touch the untouchables.

(8) "Untouchability is a necessity for man's growth.

(9) "Man has magnetic powers about him. This *shakti* is like milk. It will be damaged by improper contacts. If one can keep musk and onion together one may mix the Brahmins and untouchables."

These are the chief points summarized by the correspondent. Untouchability is a hydra-headed monster. It is, therefore, necessary, each time the monster lifts its head, to deal with it. The stories told in the Puranas are some of them most dangerous, if we do not know their bearing on the present conditions. The Shastras would be death-traps if we were to regulate our conduct according to every detail given in them or according to that of the characters therein described. They help us only to define and argue out fundamental principles. If some well-known character in religious books sinned against God or man, is that a warrant for our repeating the sin? It is enough for us to be told, once for all, *Truth* is the only thing that matters in the world, that *Truth* is God. It is irrelevant to be told that even Yudhishtira was betrayed into an untruth.\* It is more relevant for us to know that when he spoke an untruth he had to suffer for it that very moment and that his great name in no way protected him from punishment. Similarly, it is irrelevant for us to be told that Adi-Shankara avoided a *Chundala*. It is enough for us to know that a religion that teaches us to treat all that lives as we treat ourselves, cannot possibly countenance the inhuman treatment of a single creature, let alone a whole class of perfectly innocent human beings. Moreover, we have not even all the facts before us to judge what Adi-Shankara did or did not do. Still less do we know the meaning of the word '*Chandala*' where it occurs. It has admittedly many meanings, one of which is a sinner. But, if all sinners are to be regarded as untouchables, it is very much to be feared that we should all, not excluding the Pandit himself, be under the ban of untouchability. That untouchability is an old institution nobody has ever denied.

But, if it is an evil, it cannot be defended on the ground of antiquity.

If the 'untouchables' are the outcasts of the Aryan society, so much the worse for that society. And if the Aryans at some stage in their progress regarded a certain class of people as outcasts by way of punishment, there is no reason why that punishment should descend upon their progeny irrespective of causes for which their ancestors were punished.

That there is untouchability even amongst 'untouchables' merely demonstrates that evil cannot be confined and that its deadening effect is all-pervading. The existence of untouchability amongst the 'untouchables' is an additional reason for cultured Hindu society to rid itself of the curse with the quickest despatch.

If the 'untouchables' are so because they kill animals and because they have to do with flesh, blood, bones and night-soil, every nurse and every doctor should become an untouchable and so should Christians, Musalmans and all so-called high-class Hindus who kill animals for food or sacrifice.

The argument that because slaughter houses, toddy shops and houses of ill fame are or should be isolated 'untouchables' should be likewise isolated, betrays gross prejudice. Slaughter houses and toddy shops are and should be isolated. Prostitutes should be isolated because their occupation is revolting and detrimental to the well-being of society. Whereas the occupation of 'untouchables' is not only desirable but a necessity for the well-being of the society.

To say that 'untouchables' are not denied privileges of the other world is the acme of insolence. If it was possible to deny them the privileges of the other world, it is highly likely that the defenders of the monster would isolate them even in the other world.

It is throwing dust in the eyes of the 'people to say that Gandhi may touch the 'untouchables', not so other people. It is

as if the touching and service of 'untouchables' was so injurious as to require for it men specially proof against untouchable germs. Heaven only knows what punishment is in store for Musalmans, Christians and others who do not believe in untouchability !

The plea of animal magnetism is altogether overdone. The high-class men are not all sweet-smelling like musk, nor are the 'untouchables' foul-smelling like onion. There are thousands of 'untouchables' who are any day infinitely superior to the so-called high-class people.

It is painful to discover that even after five years of continuous propaganda against untouchability, there are learned people enough found to support such an immoral and evil custom. That belief in untouchability can coexist with learning in the same person, adds no status to untouchability but makes one despair of mere learning being any aid to character or sanity.

*Young India*, July 29th, 1926.

## UNTOUCHABILITY AND SWARAJ

**I** MUST SAY that the services of the so-called 'untouchables' does not rank with me in any way subordinate to any kind of political work. Just a moment ago I met two missionary friends who drew the same distinction and therefore came in for some gentle rebuke from me. I suggested to them that my work of social reform was in no way less than or subordinate to political work. The fact is that when I saw that to a certain extent my social work would be impossible without the help of political work, I took to the latter and only to the extent that it helped the former.

For what does service of the 'untouchables' or rendering justice to them mean? It means nothing less than redeeming a debt which is centuries overdue, and to expiate in some measure the sin we have been guilty of for ages, viz., that of oppressing and insulting our own kith and kin. We have behaved towards these unfortunate brethren of ours nothing better than a man turned monster behaves towards brother man. And the programme of removal of untouchability that we have set before us is just some little expiation for a monstrous wrong.

\*Gandhiji's speech on the occasion of opening a private temple in Ahmedabad to the 'untouchables' on 2nd August, 1931.



And as it is essentially by way of expiation or self-purification, it cannot be prompted by any fear or favour.

If we take up this work, fearing that the so-called untouchables would go over to another faith, or that they would wreak vengeance on us, or as a sort of political trumpcard, we shall have betrayed our ignorance of Hinduism and our ungratefulness to those who have served us for ages. I admit that it was I who pushed the item to the forefront of the Congress programme, and anyone bent on cavilling at me might say that it was a clever bait held out by me to the 'untouchables'. Let me say at once that the charge is idle. It grew on me very early in life that those who believed themselves to be Hindus must perform the penance in the shape of wiping out this stain before they could be proud of Hinduism, and as the majority of Congressmen were Hindus, and as the programme then put before the nation was one of self-purification, I put it in forefront of the Congress programme, in the conviction that unless the Hindus were prepared to wipe out this stain they could not regard themselves as fit for Swaraj. That conviction has come upon me as a self-evident proposition. If we came into power, with the stain of untouchability uneffaced, I am positive that the 'untouchables' would be far worse under that 'Swaraj' than they are now, for the simple reason that our weaknesses and our failings would then be buttressed up by the accession of power. That in brief is my position, and I have always held that this self-purification is an indispensable condition of Swaraj. It is not a position that I have arrived at today. It is as old as when I began to think of Swaraj. That is why I thank God for enabling me to participate in this function today. I have always prized opportunities for doing this kind of work and have often put aside so-called political work for work of this nature. I know that those to whom only the exciting thing called politics has an exclusive appeal will laugh at this kind of thing. But for me it is nearest to my heart.

Let those who are present here today understand that we have not been able yet to win Swaraj because of the load of sin that we are still carrying on our backs. If all the so-called touchable Hindus did real penance for having wronged their 'untouchable' brethren, Swaraj would be automatically in our hands.

And pray understand, mere removal of physical untouchability does not mean expiation. The removal of untouchability means the removal of all distinctions of superiority and inferiority attaching to birth. 'Varnashramadharma' is a beautiful institution, but if it is used to buttress up social superiority of one section over another, it will be a monstrosity. Let removal of untouchability result from a living conviction that all are one in the eyes of God, that the Father in Heaven will deal with us all with even-handed justice.

This is a private temple, but if the doors of this private temple are thrown open to the 'untouchables' how long will the doors of public temples here remain closed? Let today's function be an eye-opener to all the Hindus of Ahmedabad. Let this be the auspicious beginning of a process which will end in throwing open all the Hindu temples of Ahmedabad to the 'untouchables'. But even there, as in every other thing, I should ask you to avoid compulsion. Untouchability cannot long endure. Some years ago we obstinately clung to it, today we are indifferent. It will be a thing of the past only when the indifference is translated into a conscious deliberate awakening to a sense of the duty of self-purification. Even the indifference or sufferance would have been impossible fifteen years ago. The willing act of self-purification will, let us hope and pray, be the next step.

Only the other day a friend suggested to me that the word Harijan (man of God) be substituted for the word 'antyaja' (the last born) that is being used for 'untouchables'. It was a word used by the great saint Narasinha Metha, who, by-and-bye,

belonged to the Nagar Brahman community and who defied the whole community by claiming the 'untouchables' as his own. I am delighted to adopt that word which is sanctified by having been used by such a great saint, but it has for me a deeper meaning than you may imagine. The 'untouchable' to me is, compared to us, really a Harijan—a man of God, and we are 'Durijan' (men of evil). For whilst the 'untouchable' has toiled and moiled and dirtied his hands so that we may live in comfort and 'cleanliness', we have delighted in suppressing him. We are solely responsible for all the shortcomings and faults that we lay at the door of these 'untouchables'. It is still open to us to be Harijans ourselves, but we can only do so by heartily repenting of our sin against them.

## POSTSCRIPT



## POSTSCRIPT

The progress of events have rendered it necessary to add this by way of a postscript to this volume.

Since the MS. of the foregoing pages was sent to the press news has been received that after protracted correspondence Government have at last seen their way to allow Gandhiji to carry on his 'untouchability' abolition propaganda from behind the prison walls and have removed restrictions regarding visitors, correspondence and publicity relating to matters which are strictly limited to the removal of untouchability.

In the course of a reply to a question put to him in the Assembly on 7th November, Mr. Haig, the Home Member, made the following statement :

"Recently Mr. Gandhi represented that if he was to carry out a programme, which he has set before himself in regard to the removal of untouchability, it is necessary that he should be given greater freedom in regard to visitors and correspondence on matters strictly limited to this question. The Government does not wish to interpose obstacles in Mr. Gandhi's efforts in connection with the problem of untouchability which, as Mr. Gandhi pointed out, is a moral and religious reform having nothing to do with the Civil

Disobedience movement. The Government have, therefore, removed all restrictions regarding visitors, correspondence and publicity relating to matters which are strictly limited to the removal of untouchability. However, the restrictions in regard to interviews, specifically on political questions, stand totally on a different footing and the position in regard to this remains unchanged as is clear from the reply given by the Private Secretary to the Viceroy to Maulana Shaukat Ali."

Obviously what has prompted the Government's decision is the declaration that Gandhiji made before he broke his fast, that the fast would be certainly resumed if the Caste Hindus did not play their part in the matter of removing untouchability within the next few months, and his promise to join Sgt. Kelappan (a reference to whose case has already been made on p. 85, in the chapter, "The Aftermath") in his 'fast unto death' if the Guruvayur temple in Malabar was not thrown open to the Harijans by the 1st of January, 1933.

Gandhiji has set forth his position in this respect in detail in a series of statements that he has issued since the relaxation of restrictions upon him. Three of these will be found reproduced in this section.

## A NEAR POSSIBILITY

*[ The following is the first statement issued by Gandhiji from the Yeravda Jail on 4th November, 1932. ]*

FOR REASONS over which I had no control I have not been able to deal with the question of untouchability, as I had fully intended to after the breaking of the fast. The Government having now granted me permission to carry on public propaganda in connection with the work, I am able to deal with the numerous correspondents who have been writing to me either in criticism of the Yeravda Pact, or to seek guidance, or to know my views about the different questions that arise in the course of the campaign against untouchability. In this preliminary statement I propose to confine myself to the salient questions only, deferring for the time being other questions which do not call for immediate disposal.

I take up first the question of the possibility of my resuming the fast. Some correspondents contend that the fast savours of coercion and should not have been undertaken at all and that, therefore, it should never be resumed. Some others have argued that there is no warrant in Hindu religion, or any religion for that matter, for a fast like mine. I do not propose to deal with the religious aspect. Suffice it to say that it was at God's call



that I embarked upon the last fast and it would be at His call that it would be resumed, if it ever is. But when it was first undertaken, it was undoubtedly for removal of untouchability, root and branch. That it took the form it did was no choice of mine. The Cabinet decision precipitated the crisis of my life, but I knew that the revocation of the British Cabinet's decision was to be but the beginning of the end. A tremendous force could not be set in motion merely in order to alter a political decision, unless it had behind it a much deeper meaning, even unknown to its authors. The people affected instinctively recognized that meaning and responded.

PERHAPS NO MAN within living memory has travelled so often from one end of India to the other or has penetrated so many villages and come in contact with so many millions as I have. They have all known my life. They have known that I have recognized no barriers between 'untouchables' and 'touchables' or caste and outcast. They have heard me speak often in their own tongues denouncing untouchability in unmeasured terms, describing it as a curse and a blot upon Hinduism. With rare exceptions, at hundreds of these mass meetings or at private meetings in all parts of India, there has been no protest against my presentation of the case against untouchability. Crowds have passed resolutions denouncing untouchability and pledging themselves to remove it from their midst and they have on innumerable occasions called God as witness to their pledge and asked for His blessing that He may give them strength to carry out their pledge. It was against these millions that my fast was undertaken and it was their spontaneous love that brought about a transformation inside of five days and brought into being the Yeravda Pact. And it will be against them that the fast will be resumed if that Pact is not carried out by them in its fullness. The Government are now practically out of it.

Their part of the obligation they fulfilled promptly. The major part of the resolutions of the Yeravda Pact has to be fulfilled by these millions, the so-called Caste Hindus, who have flocked to the meetings I have described. It is they who have to embrace the suppressed brethren and sisters as their very own, whom they have to invite to their temples, to their homes, to their schools. The 'untouchables' in the villages should be made to feel that their shackles have been broken, that they are in no way inferior to their fellow-villagers, that they are worshippers of the same God as other villagers and are entitled to the same rights and privileges that the latter enjoy.

BUT IF THESE vital conditions of the Pact are not carried out by Caste Hindus, could I possibly live to live God and man?

If Caste Hindus I ventured even to tell Dr. Ambedkar, Rao Fail Bahadur Raja and other friends belonging to the suppressed group that they should regard me as a hostage for the due fulfilment by Caste Hindus of the conditions of the Pact. The fast, if it has to come, will not be for the coercion of those who are opponents of the reform, but it will be intended to sting into action those who have been my comrades or who have taken pledges for the removal of untouchability. If they belie their pledges, or if they never meant to abide by them, and their Hinduism was a mere camouflage, I should have no interest left in life. My fast, therefore, ought not to affect the opponents of reform, nor even fellow-workers and the millions who have led me to believe that they were with me and the Congress in the campaign against untouchability, if the latter have on second thoughts come to the conclusion that untouchability is not after all a crime against God and humanity.

In my opinion, fasting for purification of self and others is an age-long institution and it will subsist so long as man believes in God. It is the prayer to the Almighty from an anguished

heart. But whether my argument is wise or foolish, I cannot be dislodged from my position so long as I do not see the folly or the error of it. It will be resumed only in obedience to the inner voice, and only if there is a manifest breakdown of the Yeravda Pact, owing to the criminal neglect of Caste Hindus to implement its conditions. Such neglect would mean a betrayal of Hinduism. I should not care to remain its living witness.

THERE IS ANOTHER fast which is a near possibility and that is in connection with the opening of the Guruvayur temple in

Kerala. It was at my urgent request that  
A Near Possibility

Sjt. Kelappan suspended his fast for three months, a fast that had well-nigh brought him to death's door. I would be in honour bound to fast with him if on or before the first of January next that temple is not opened to the 'untouchables' precisely on the same terms as the 'touchables,' and if it becomes necessary for Sjt. Kelappan to resume his fast. I have been obliged to dwell at some length upon these possible fasts because of the receipt of hot correspondence from two or three quarters. Co-workers, however, should not be agitated over the possibility. To become unnerved over a prospect one would not like to face, very often results in its materializing. The best way of averting it is for all affected by it to put forth their whole strength into the work that would render the occurrence impossible.

Correspondents have asked whether interdining and intermarriage are part of the movement against untouchability. In my opinion they are not. They touch the caste-men equally with the outcasts. It is, therefore, not obligatory on an anti-untouchability worker to devote himself or herself to interdining and intermarriage reform. Personally, I am of opinion that this reform is coming sooner than we expect. Restriction on intercaste dining and intercaste marriage is no part of Hindu religion. It is a social custom which crept into Hinduism when perhaps it was in its

decline, and was then meant perhaps to be a temporary protection against disintegration of Hindu society. Today these two prohibitions are weakening Hindu society, and emphasis on them has turned the attention of mass mind from the fundamentals which are vital to life's growth. Wherever, therefore, people voluntarily take part in functions where 'touchables' and 'untouchables', Hindus and non-Hindus are invited to join dinner parties, I welcome them as a healthy sign. But I should never dream of making this reform, however desirable in itself it may be, part of an all-India reform which has been long overdue.

Untouchability in the form we all know it is a canker eating into the very vitals of Hinduism. Dining and marriage restrictions stunt Hindu society. I think the distinction is fundamental. It would be unwise in a hurricane campaign to overweight and thus endanger the main issue. It may even amount to a breach of faith with the masses to cull upon them suddenly to view the removal of untouchability in a light different from what they have been taught to believe it to be. On the one hand, therefore, whilst interdining may go on where the public is itself ready for it, it should not be part of the India-wide campaign.

I HAVE LETTERS, some of them angrily worded, from those who style themselves *Sanatanists*. For them untouchability

is the essence of Hinduism. Some of them regard me as a renegade. Some others consider that I have imbibed notions against untouchability and the like from Christianity and Islam. Some again quote scriptures in defence of untouchability. To these I have promised a reply through this statement. I would venture, therefore, to tell these correspondents that I claim myself to be a *Sanatanist*. Their definition of a *Sanatanist* is obviously different from mine. For me *Sanatana Dharma* is the vital faith handed down from generations belonging even to pre-historic period and based upon the Vedas and the writings that

A Reply to  
Sanatanists

followed them. For me the Vedas are as indefinable as God and Hinduism. It would be only partially true to say that the Vedas are the four books which one finds in print. These books are themselves remnants of the discourses left by the unknown seers. Those of later generations added to these original treasures according to their lights. There then arose a great and loftyminded man, the composer of the Gita. He gave to the Hindu world a synthesis of Hindu Religion at once deeply philosophical and yet easily to be understood by any unsophisticated seeker. It is the one open book to every Hindu who will care to study it, and if all the other scriptures were reduced to ashes, the seven hundred verses of this imperishable booklet are quite enough to tell one what Hinduism is and how one can live up to it. And I claim to be a *Sanatanist* because for forty years I have been seeking literally to live up to the teachings of that book. What ever is contrary to its main theme I reject as un-Hindu. It excludes no faith and no teacher. It gives me great joy to be able to say that I have studied the Bible, the Koran, Zend Avesta and the other scriptures of the world with the same reverence that I have given to the Gita. This reverent reading has strengthened my faith in the Gita. They have broadened my outlook and therefore my Hinduism. Lives of Zoroaster, Jesus and Mohamad as I have understood them have illumined many a passage in the Gita. What, therefore, these *Sanatani* friends have hurled against me as a taunt has been to me a source of consolation. I take pride in calling myself a Hindu because I find the term broad enough not merely to tolerate but to assimilate the teachings of prophets from all the four corners of the earth. I find no warrant for untouchability in this Book of Life. On the contrary it compels me, by an appeal to my reason and a more penetrating appeal to my heart, in language that has a magnetic touch about it, to believe that all life is one and that it is through God and must return to Him.

According to *Sanatana Dharma* taught by that venerable

Mother, life does not consist in outward rites and ceremonial, but it consists in the uttermost inner purification and merging oneself, body, soul and mind, in the divine essence. I have gone to the masses in their millions with this message of the Gita burnt into my life. And they have listened to me, I am quite sure, not for any political wisdom or for eloquence, but because they have instinctively recognized me as one of them, as one belonging to their faith. And as days have gone by, my belief has grown stronger and stronger that I could not be wrong in claiming to belong to *Sanatana Dharma*, and if God wills it, He will let me seal that claim with my death.

## THE RIGHT WAY AND THE WRONG WAY

[ *The following is the second statement issued by Gandhiji in connection with his latest great drive against untouchability on 5th November 1932.* ]

**A** CORRESPONDENT, in spite of having received liberal education, suggests that before *Harijans* are put on a level with Caste Hindus, they should become fit for such reception, shed their dirty habits, give up eating carrion ; and another goes the length of saying that Bhangis and Chamars who are engaged in what he considers are ' dirty occupations ' should give them up. These critics forget that caste-men are responsible for whatever bad habits are to be observed amongst the *Harijans*. The so-called higher castes have deprived them of facilities for keeping themselves clean and also the incentive for doing so. As for the occupations of scavenging and tanning, they are no more dirty than many other occupations I can name. What may be admitted is that these occupations like several others are carried on in a dirty manner. That again is due to the high-handed indifference and criminal neglect of the ' high castes '. I can say from personal experience that both scavenging and tanning can be done in a perfectly healthy and clean manner. Every mother is a scavenger in regard to her

own children and every student of modern medicine is a tanner inasmuch as he has to dissect and skin human carcasses. But we consider theirs to be sacred occupations. I submit that the ordinary scavenger's and the tanner's occupations are no less sacred and no less useful than those of mothers and medical men. We shall go wrong if castemen regard themselves as patrons distributing favours to the *Harijans*. Whatever is done now by the Caste Hindus for the *Harijans* will be but a tardy reparation for the wrongs done to them for generations, and if now they have to be received in their existing state, as they must be received, it is a well deserved punishment for the past guilt. But there is this certain satisfaction that the very act of receiving them with open hearts would be a sufficient incentive to cleanliness, and the castemen will for their own comfort and convenience provide *Harijans* with facilities for keeping themselves clean.

It is well to remind ourselves of what wrongs we have heaped upon the devoted heads of the *Harijans*. Socially they are lepers. Economically they are worse than slaves. Religiously they are denied entrance to places we miscall 'houses of God'. They are denied the use, on the same terms as the castemen, of public roads, public schools, public hospitals, public wells, public taps, public parks and the like, and in some cases their approach within a measured distance is a social crime, and in some other rare enough cases their very sight is an offence. They are relegated for their residence to the worst quarters of cities or villages where they practically get no social services. Caste Hindu lawyers and doctors will not serve them as they do other members of society. Brahmins will not officiate at their religious functions. The wonder is that they are at all able to eke out an existence or that they still remain within the Hindu fold. They are too downtrodden to rise in revolt against their suppressors.



I have recalled these tragic and shameful facts in order to make the workers vividly realize the implications of the Yevavda Pact. It is only ceaseless effort that can raise these down-trodden fellow-beings from degradation, purify Hinduism, and raise the whole Hindu Society and with it the whole of India.

Let us not be stunned by this simple recital of the wrongs. If the demonstration during the last week was a genuine expression of repentance on the part of Caste Hindus, all will be well, and every *Harijan* will soon feel the glow of freedom. But before this much desired end can be achieved the message of freedom will have to be carried to the remotest village. Indeed the work in the village is far more difficult than in the big cities where it is possible quickly to mobilize public opinion. Now that there is the All-India Anti-untouchability League, workers should work in coordination with that League. And here I would like to recall what Dr. Ambedkar told me. He said, "Let there be no repetition of the old method when the reformer claimed to know more of the requirements of his victims than the victims themselves," and, therefore, he added, "tell your workers to ascertain from the representatives of the *Harijans* what their first need is and how they would like it to be satisfied. Joint refreshments are good enough by way of demonstration, but they may be overdone. There is a flavour of patronage about them. I would not attend them myself. The more dignified procedure would be to invite us to ordinary social functions without any fuss. Even temple entry, good and necessary as it is, may wait. The crying need is the raising of the economic status and decent behaviour in the daily contact." I must not repeat here some of the harrowing details given by him from his own bitter experiences. I felt the force of his remarks. I hope everyone of my readers will do likewise.

Many suggestions have been sent to me for adoption by the reformers. One is a repetition of what Swami Shraddhanandji

used to repeat so often, namely, that every Hindu should have in his home a *Harijan* who would be for all practical purposes a member of the family. The second comes from a non-Hindu friend deeply interested in India's welfare. He says that every well-to-do Hindu should bear the expense of giving, if possible under his own observation, higher education to a *Harijan* young man or girl so that these after finishing their education might work for the uplift of fellow-*Harijans*. Both the suggestions are worthy of consideration and adoption. I would ask all who have fruitful suggestions to make to pass them on to the newly established League. Correspondents should recognize my limitations. From behind the prison gates, I can only tender advice to the League and the people. I can take no part in the real execution of plans. They should also recognize that my opinions, based as they must be on insufficient data, and often on second-hand information, are liable to revision in the light of new facts and should, therefore, be received with caution. THOUGH IT IS NOW past history I would devote a paragraph to the objection raised by a correspondent and even voiced in

Penance; no

Patronage

suppressed tones in the press. Referring to the political part of the Pact they ask, 'What have you gained by it? The *Harijans* have surely got much more than the Prime Minister gave.' Well, that is exactly the gain. My objection to the decision was that it gave stone instead of bread. This Pact has given bits of bread. I personally would have rejoiced with Dr. Moonje if the *Harijans* had got all the seats allotted to the Hindus. That would have been the greatest gain to Caste Hindus and Hinduism. What I wanted and what I still want is their complete merger in the Caste Hindus and the latter's in the former. It is my deliberate opinion, not likely to be altered by any fresh fact that may come to light, that the more the suppressors give to the suppressed the more they gain. They gain *pro tanto* discharge from overdue debts. Unless the Caste

Hindus approach the question in that humble, penitent, religious and right spirit, the remaining part of the Fast will never be observed in the spirit that seemed to pervade Hindu society during the fast week.

I would like to tender my congratulations to those Princes who have opened their State temples to the *Harijans* and have otherwise proclaimed banishment of untouchability from their States. If I may say it, they have thereby done some penance on their own behalf and their people. I hope that the Hindus residing in these States will carry out the terms of these proclamations and so fraternize with them as to make the *Harijans* feel that they never were the despised outcasts of Hindu humanity. We are too near the scene of tragedy to realize that this canker of untouchability has travelled far beyond its prescribed limits and has sapped the foundations of the whole nation. The touch-me-not spirit pervades the atmosphere. If, therefore, this white ant is touched at its source, I feel sure that we shall soon forget the differences with regard to caste and caste and religion and religion and begin to believe that even as all Hindus are one and indivisible, so are all Hindus, Mussalmans, Sikhs, Parsees, Jews and Christians, branches of the same parent tree. Though religions are many, Religion is one. That is the lesson I would have us learn from the campaign against untouchability. And we will learn it, if we prosecute it in the religious spirit with a determination that will not be resisted.

## A DEBT OF HONOUR

*[Questioned by a representative of the Associated Press about Dr. Ambedkar's declaration that temple entry was not worth risking his life Gandhiji made the following statement.]*

I DO NOT TAKE the light view that Dr. Ambedkar does of the temple entry question. In my opinion it is a deciding test as to whether the orthodox Hindu mind has responded to the call of time or not and whether it is prepared to purge Hinduism of the black mark of untouchability. Nothing in my opinion will strike the imagination of the Hindu mass mind including *Harijans* as throwing open all public temples to them precisely on the same terms as Caste Hindus. I can understand Dr. Ambedkar's comparative indifference, but I am not thinking of a few cultured men belonging to the Depressed Classes, but I am thinking of the uncultured dumb many. After all Hindu temples play a most important part in the life of the masses, and I who have been trying all my life to identify myself with the most illiterate and down-trodden, cannot be satisfied until all temples are open to outcasts of Hindu humanity.

THIS,<sup>6</sup>HOWEVER, does not mean that I belittle in any shape or form other disabilities under which they are labouring. I

feel about them just as keenly as Dr. Ambedkar. Only I feel the evil is so deep-rooted

that one must not make the choice between different disabilities, but must tackle them all at once. That is the burden of my correspondence with the Anti-untouchability League also. The Guruvayur temple has come in my way by accident and I have no option left to me. After all Mr. Kelappan is in my opinion one of the noblest of India's silent servants. A distinguished public career was open to him any day. He is a well-known worker of Malabar. But he deliberately threw in his lot with 'unapproachables' and 'invisibles'. I had the pleasure and honour of working with him at the time of the Vaikam Satyagraha. Long before that time and ever since he has been devoting himself to the uplift of suppressed humanity. As the public know, after long waiting he made a fixed determination to give up his life in an attempt to have the Guruvayur temple opened to Harijans.

I discovered, however, a flaw\* in his fast and I immediately pointed it out to him, and although he believed that victory was within sight, he nobly responded and let it slip from his hands,

\*The following telegrams sent by Gandhiji to Sjt. Kelappan will serve to explain the nature of the flaw referred to above:—

Yeravda, Sept. 29

"The Zamorin wires asking me to appeal to you to suspend the fast for some months. He says the present entry of 'untouchables' would wound orthodox conscience and such wounding would amount to coercion. Ask yourself whether there is any room for you on this relevant ground to postpone the fast and whether in terms of the Zamorin's telegram you had given sufficient notice of the extreme step."

Yeravda, Oct. 2

"Your wire. Immediate prospective result must not affect decision. On pure ethics I must reiterate the opinion that you should suspend the fast giving notice as per my telegram. God helping, I shall bear my share of the burden. Wire compliance."

retraced his steps and suspended his fast. When I telegraphed to him I bound myself to fast with him if resumption became necessary on the termination of three months' notice he gave. I should be an unworthy servant of India and unworthy comrade if I now flinched and abandoned Kelappan to his fate, but there is something more than the life of a comrade or my own personal honour. Everyone recognizes that the Depressed Classes question has to be solved now or never, not at any rate within the present generation or several generations to come. There are thousands of men and women like me who cling to Hinduism because they believe that there is in it the amplest scope for mental, moral and spiritual expansion. This bar sinister put upon nearly sixty million human beings is a standing demonstration against that claim. Men like me feel that untouchability is no integral part of Hinduism. It is an excrescence, but if it is found to be otherwise, and if the Hindu mass mind really hugs untouchability, reformers like me have no other option but to sacrifice ourselves on the altar of our convictions.

I HAVE PATIENTLY and silently listened to the taunt that such a fast is tantamount to suicide. I don't believe it to be such.

#### Acid Test of Hinduism

On the contrary, for men with deep religious conviction there is no other outlet for the soul than this final sacrifice when every other effort seems perfectly hopeless. This campaign, therefore, in my opinion is an acid test of what I have claimed for Hinduism, and I can only repeat what I said at the Round Table Conference that Hinduism dies if untouchability lives, and untouchability has to die if Hinduism is to live; and today I make bold to say that there are hundreds, if not thousands, of Indian men and women who would lay down their lives even as Kelappan and I propose to do to vindicate the claim for Hinduism that it is not a narrow creed or dogma, but it is a living faith, designed to satisfy the most exacting conscience, the deepest thinker and the godliest person.



## CHRONOLOGY OF THE FAST

- November 13, 1931    Gandhiji declared in the Minorities' Committee in London that he would resist separate electorates for the Depressed Classes with his life.
- March 11, 1932      Gandhiji addressed a letter to Sir Samuel Hoare declaring his intention to fast unto death in accordance with his declaration in London.
- April 13             Sir Samuel Hoare's reply.
- August 17            Publication of the decision of His Majesty's Government regarding communal representation in the future constitution of India.
- August 18            Gandhiji's letter to the Prime Minister.
- September 8\*        The Prime Minister's reply.
- September 9         Gandhiji's letter communicating his final decision to the Prime Minister.
- September 12        Gandhi-Hoare-Macdonald correspondence published.



September 15	Gandhiji's Letter to Bombay Government.
September 19	Leaders' Conference met in Bombay. Gandhiji interviewed in jail by Bombay representatives.
September 20	Fast begun. Gandhiji gave his first press interview.
September 23	Turn for the worse in Gandhiji's condition.
September 24	Yeravda Pact signed.
September 26	Gandhiji pronounced by the doctors to be in 'danger zone'. Government declaration accepting Yeravda Pact—fast terminated.
September 27	Replying to journalists Gandhiji made a statement laying down his conditions for co-operation.
September 30	Restrictions on Gandhiji reimposed.
November 4	Facilities for conducting 'untouchability' work from prison restored. Gandhiji's first statement, announcing possibility of another fast over Guruvayur temple entry question, issued.

